

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



September 2019

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²THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Science of Personal Magnetism II*

There are laws, very fine, which are beyond the physical laws. The finest is what we call spirit; the grossest, the body. We know that the greatest power is lodged in the fine, not the coarse. We see a man take up a huge weight, we see his muscles as well, and all over his body we see signs of exertion, and we think the muscles are powerful things. But it is the thin thread-like things, the nerves, which bring power to the muscles; the moment one of these threads is cut off from reaching the muscles, they are not able to work at all. These tiny nerves bring the power from something still finer, and that again in its turn brings it from something finer still—thought, and so on. So, it is the fine that is really the seat of power. Of course we can see the movements in the gross, but when fine movements take place, we cannot see them. When a gross thing moves, we catch it, and thus we naturally identify movement with things which are gross. But all the power is really in the fine. We do not see any movement in the fine, perhaps, because the movement is so intense that we cannot perceive it. But if by any science, any investigation, we are helped to get hold of these finer forces which are the cause of the expression, the expression itself will be under control. There is a little bubble coming from the bottom of a lake; we do not see it coming all the time, we see it only when it bursts on the surface; so we can perceive thoughts only after



they develop a great deal, or after they become actions. We constantly complain that we have no control over our actions, over our thoughts. But how can we have it? If we can get control over the fine movements, if we can get hold of thought at the root, before it has become thought, before it has become action, then it would be possible for us to control the whole. Now if there is a method by which we can analyse, investigate, understand, and finally grapple with those finer powers, the finer causes, then alone is it possible to have control over ourselves, and the man who has control over his own mind assuredly will have control over every other mind. That is why purity and morality have always been the object of religion; a pure, moral man has control of himself. And all minds are the same, different parts of one Mind. He who knows one lump of clay has known all the clay in the universe. He who knows and controls his own mind, knows the secret of every mind and has power over every mind.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 2.14-16.

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Editor
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Cover Design
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Internet Edition Coordination
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Circulation
Indrajit Sinha
Tapas Jana

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Prabuddha Bharata
Advaita Ashrama
PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt Champawat · 262 524
Uttarakhand, India
Tel: 91 · 96909 98179
prabuddhabharata@gmail.com
pb@advaitaashrama.org

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mail@advaitaashrama.org

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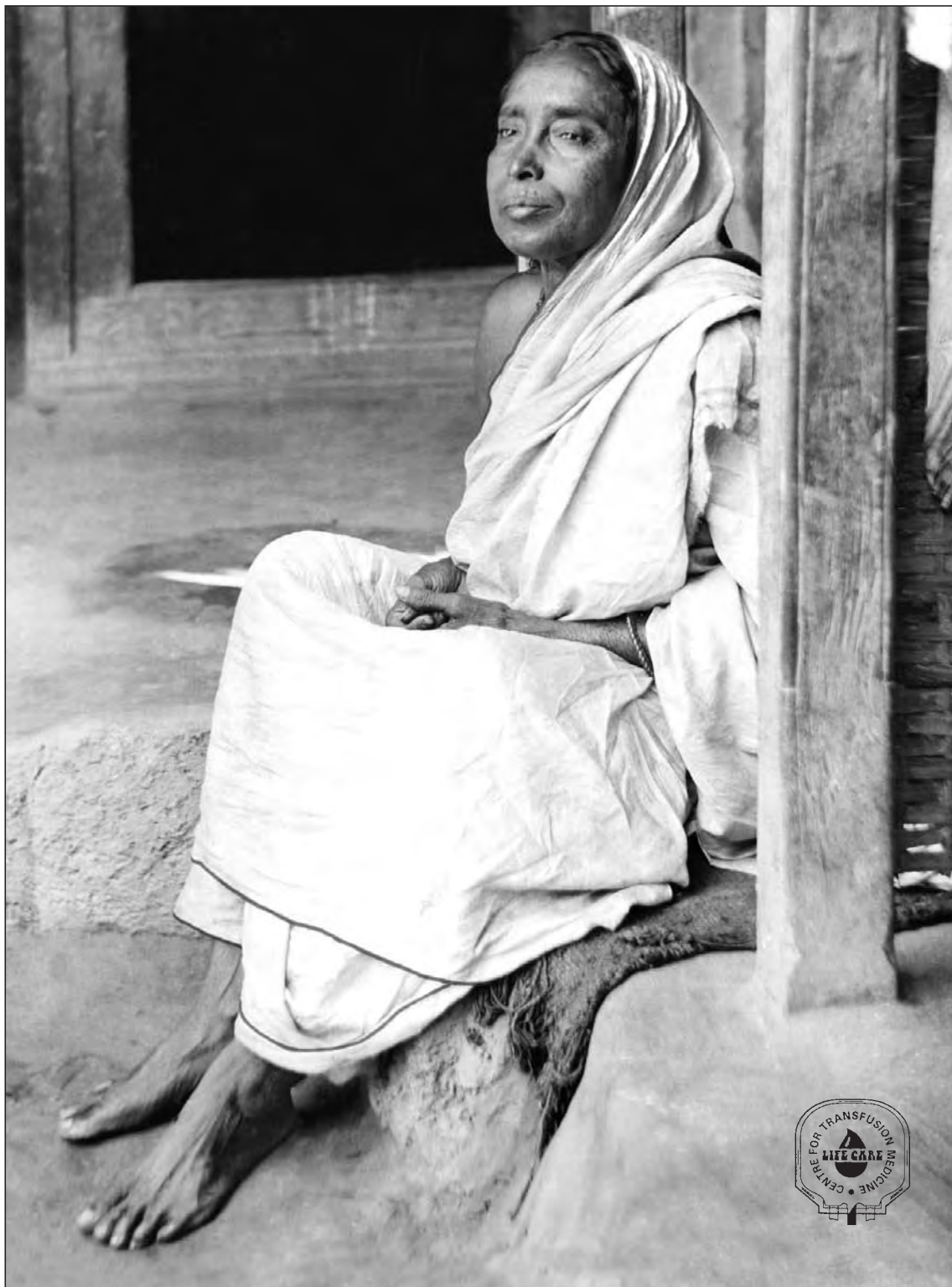
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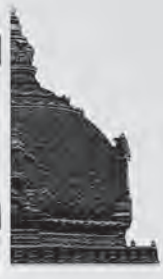
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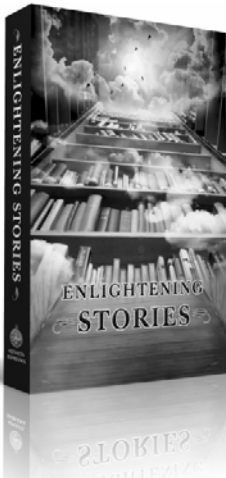
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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Maitrayaniya Upanishad

September 2019
Vol. 124, No. 9

मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथान्यत्राप्युक्तं भूतेन्द्रियार्थानतिक्रम्य ततः प्रव्रज्याज्यं धृतिदण्डं धनुर्गृहीत्वाऽनभिमानमयेन चैवेषुणा
तं ब्रह्मद्वारपारं निहत्याद्यं सम्मोहमौली तृष्णोर्ष्याकुण्डली तन्द्रीराघवेत्र्यभिमानाध्यक्षः क्रोधज्यं
प्रलोभदण्डं धनुर्गृहीत्वेच्छामयेन चैवेषुणैमानि खलु भूतानि हन्ति तं हत्वोङ्कारप्लवेनान्तर्हृदयाकाशस्य पारं
तीर्त्वाविर्भूतेऽन्तराकाशे शनैरवटैवावटकृद्वातुकामः संविशत्येवं ब्रह्मशालां विशेत् । ॥ ६.२८ ॥

*Athany-atrapy-uktam bhutendriyarthan-atikramya tatah pravrajyajyam dhriti-dandam
dhanur-grihitva'nabhimanamayena chaiveshuna tam brahma-dvara-param nihatyadyam
sammoha-mauli trishnershyakundali tandri-raghavetry-abhimana-adhyakshah krodhajyam
pralobha-dandam dhanur-grihitvechchhamayena chaiveshunemani khalu bhutani hanti tam
hatvomkara-plavena-antar-bridaya-akashasya param tirtva-avirbhute'ntarakashe shanakair-
avataivavatakriddhatukamah samvishaty-evam brahmashalam vishet. (6.28)*

And thus it has been said elsewhere: 'Having passed beyond the elements, the senses, and the sense-objects, and then having seized the bow, whose string is the life of a mendicant, and whose stick is steadfastness and having struck down with the arrow that is freedom from self-conceit, the first guardian of Brahma's door, who has delusion as the crown; greed and envy as earrings; laziness, sleep, and impurity as the staff; the cord of self-love; who seizes the bow whose string is anger; whose stick is temptation; who kills these living beings with the arrow of desires; having killed that person; having crossed over with the boat of Om to the other side of the space in the heart, in the inner space which gradually becomes manifest, one should enter Brahma's hall as a miner seeking minerals enters into the mine.' (6.28)

THIS MONTH

THE HUMAN BODY is a wonderful machine that has many aspects and proper upkeep and training of the body is necessary to ensure a healthy life. For this purpose, it helps if one can engage in various kinds of sports. This is discussed in **The Need for Multifarious Sports**.

Dr Shyamali Chowdhury, Centre for Indological Studies and Research, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata traces the connections between **Swami Vivekananda and Hindu Mela**.

Swami Satyapriyananda, a former editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, discusses **The Status of the World**.

Swami Kritarthananda, Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, explains **Swami Vivekananda's Catchphrase: 'Love of Death'** and clarifies the real meaning of loving death in this context.

Nilanjan Bhowmick, assistant professor of philosophy at Delhi University, writes the second and final instalment of his paper on **Norms of Foundations**. In this paper, Bhowmick discusses what philosophers talk about when they talk about foundations. It is obvious enough that philosophy has gone through changes regarding what they took as foundations. In the twentieth century, philosophy of language held a preeminent place, just as metaphysics did before Cartesian doubt took centre stage. In this paper, Bhowmick has tried to bring out the norms that govern philosophers' thinking about foundations. He has also tried to argue that the tension between different branches of philosophy claiming a foundational status depends on differing

conceptions of what a naturalism must embrace. He concludes by suggesting, to get clear about what foundational work means, that we need to think how to change one of the significant meta-norms of foundational thinking: that foundations do not change anything above.

The young have wonderful insights on various issues. In *Young Eyes*, such insights are brought to the readers every month. This month we see what children think about **Protecting the Environment**.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Ahimsa**. Understanding this popular word is necessary to understand its meaning.

Devotion and faith many times bring about unexpected results, almost miracles, and also gives the vision of God. This is shown in the third and final instalment of the story **The Faith that Brought a Miracle**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Anmika Kathaigal*.

Joseph Henrich, professor of human evolutionary biology at Harvard University, the Canada Research Chair in Culture, Cognition, and Co-evolution at the University of British Columbia, professor in the departments of psychology and economy at the University of British Columbia, co-author of *Why Humans Cooperate* and co-editor of *Experimenting with Social Norms* has written the book **The Secret of Our Success**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

The Need for Multifarious Sports

W E HUMAN BEINGS HAVE been endowed with a highly advanced and sophisticated machinery in the human body. It is our responsibility to maintain this body in good shape and ensure that it remains healthy during its lifetime. To achieve this, we have to ensure that food, rest, and exercise are optimally available to the body. And the best way to ensure this is to regularly play some sports. That would ensure that we have some disciplining of the body. Engaging in sports regularly also ensures that there is a healthy psychological development in a person. It is not for nothing that 'sportsmanship' is considered a sterling quality in a person.

The need for and importance of sports cannot be overemphasised. Every society and every nation should encourage the playing of sports by all, especially the children and the youth. Sports help one attain good fitness, increase the self-esteem, develop one's leadership skills, inculcate positive values, improve emotional health, make one more sociable, increase the level of discipline in a person, help improve concentration and consequently improve one's academic performance, improve teamwork and cooperation, help one to manage time efficiently, develop an attitude of success, increase patience and perseverance, improve sleep, and in general develop life-long good habits. Thus, sports should be a vital part of every individual's life.

This discussion, however, is not about the importance of sports, as that is well established. Since the government plays a pivotal role in the cultivation of various sports, it is pertinent and

urgent that India starts focussing on a number of sports at the school, college, and social levels. For various reasons, cricket has become practically the only sport that occupies the attention of the present-day Indian mind. While some regions have affinities to some different sports like football or soccer, Indians are mostly enamoured

In an age of pluralism in everything, it is necessary that there be pluralism in sports.

with cricket. This has overshadowed the present and future of many other sports like hockey, in which India excelled some decades ago.

The government of India needs to have a comprehensive and holistic policy on sports. Every sport has some unique features and involves excellence in some aspects of the human body. A hundred-metre athlete is usually not suited for a marathon, because both the events require different skills. While a game of basketball requires much running and coordination, a game of cricket might not comparatively require so much in those aspects, but requires many other skills. More importantly, not everyone is suited for the same game, for instance, cricket, and everyone will not like playing the same sport.

The problem is worsened by the government approving schools and colleges that do not even have a playground. The pupils are told over and over again to concentrate only on studies and not on any other thing. When the students return to their homes, they do not go out to play, but glue themselves to their computers, smartphones, or

any of those numerous devices that have now turned us into couch-potatoes with potbellies!

Even in the case of schools and colleges that have playground, most do not have proper equipment for playing a sport. If a student wants to play basketball, there is usually not a basketball court or a basketball. A hockey enthusiast, rare as they come these days, does not get to lay one's hands on a decent hockey stick. And the less said is better about those who want to develop their interest in archery, discus throw, javelin throw, or any other sport that has no media attention.

Cricket, on the other hand, is the sport that is played everywhere right from the underdeveloped localities to posh residential neighbourhoods. The poor have makeshift gear for this sport whereas the affluent have multiple alternatives to choose from when it comes to cricket gear.

The average Indian child or youth does not have any idea about many sports like rifle shooting and golf. Most Indians do not spend any time on playing any sport. In view of the fact that India is the global capital of the dreaded lifestyle disease that is diabetes, the development of sports in society assumes paramount significance. Too much focus on a particular sport also leads to the near extinction of indigenous sports. In the Indian context, some such indigenous sports are kabaddi, kho-kho, and mallakhambha. It is necessary that we preserve the traditional sports in order to preserve the heritage of a nation or society. For instance, the martial art kalaripayattu or the Indian art of stick-fighting, do not have many teachers or students today.

In an age of pluralism in everything—in beliefs, technologies, literary styles, and even in cuisines—it is necessary that there be pluralism in sports. Why cannot a girl from a lower-middle class household aspire to be a world-class golf player? Why cannot a boy living in a rustic village in the foothills of Himalayas in India not

aim to be a lawn tennis player? Unfortunately, the dynamics of social stratification have crept into sports, particularly in India. Some sports have all the sponsors and funding, whereas many other sports have no support whatsoever.

When is the last time anyone heard of a public frenzy over the sports of swimming in India? A lopsided effort in the field of sports has resulted in poor Indian representation in different events of international sporting like the Olympics. Swami Vivekananda emphasised the need for keeping one's body strong and active. He also wanted that Indians preserve their cultural heritage. Both of these can be done easily by promoting the indigenous sports of India. Indians should not be satisfied with introducing such indigenous sports in some international events, like the introduction of kabaddi. Indians should instead try to popularise various Indian sports among other nations and cultures, much like cricket has been popularised even in nations that did not know this sport till some decades ago.

Sports should exercise all parts of the body. Some sports give more exercise to some parts of the body, while some others exercise the other parts. By encouraging different kinds of sports and promoting them, Indians can ensure that every citizen gets access to playing and learning any sport of one's choice, much like one gets a choice of various dishes in a restaurant. Everyone should be trained in at least five different sports and everyone should have the resources to be a professional player of any sport of one's choice. If this is not done immediately, many sports would soon become extinct and we would have to remain content with annual seasons of some select sports like cricket, baseball, or soccer.

Just like there is much choice in other aspects of human life, there should be many alternatives in sports. We need to strive hard to make this possibility a reality.



Swami Vivekananda and Hindu Mela

Dr Shyamali Chowdhury

DURING LATE nineteenth century, European culture had been deeply rooted in the mind of a large group of young educated native Bengalis whose behaviour was more European than Indian. They needed some jolt to awaken from a long sleep of European imitation. It was a troubled time when a band of young restless and agitated Bengalis wanted to dissociate themselves from Hindu society, even their Hindu names. An endeavour for change and progress was necessary to instil the spirit of Hindu nationalism. One such stimulus came from an English booklet published in 1866, *Prospectus of a Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal*, written by Rajnarayan Basu (1826–99), venerable Brahmo preacher, veteran social reformer, and a national leader.¹ This booklet was translated into Bengali and circulated by Umesh Chandra Dutta, the secretary of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.²

This booklet created a sensation among some patriots and Nabagopal Mitra came forward to organise the Hindu Mela, a movement also called the Jatiya Mela, to promote the national feelings among the Bengalis, as no nation can be great without the cultivation of the ethos of nationalism. It was called ‘Chaitra-Mela’ in the first three assemblies.³ The prospectus penned by Rajnarayan Basu contained some convincing arguments to kindle the nationalist feelings among the European-minded Bengalis.

The proposed methods were to revive national gymnastic exercises, the traditional yoga, establishing a Hindu music school, school for

Hindu medicine, cultivation of Sanskrit and Bengali, education of children in their mother-tongue before giving them English education, promotion of publication in Bengali, development of the sense of nationality and respect for the national language, prevention of adulteration of the mother-tongue with English words, exchanging greetings on the occasion of the Bengali New Year day of *Baisakh*, to abandon dreadful foreign influences like getting drunk, to encourage and cultivate the Indian ways of saluting—namaste and pranam—along with the cordial usage of the hearty handshake (21–2).

Inspired by these ideas, ‘to promote the ethos of nationalism among all strata of Hindu society and to bring development in various fields by the self-effort of the Hindus’, Nabagopal Mitra, the editor of the English weekly, *The National Paper* organised the Jatiya Sabha as a special part of Jatiya Mela or Hindu Mela (8).

The first assembly of this national movement was held on 12 April 1867, Bengali Samvat 1273, on the day of Chaitra-Sankranti, 30 Chaitra, the last day of the Bengali calendar, and hence it was called the Chaitra Mela. *The National Paper* dated 17 April 1867, printed that ‘the first assembly of this kind was held on Friday last, the day of Choitra Shankrantee at the garden house of the late Rajah Nursing Chunder Roy, Chitpur ... opened with an inaugural address by Baboo Srepaty Mookerjee, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Bengal’ (26).

Till recently it was wrongly believed that the first assembly of Hindu Mela was held in the



Rajnarayan Basu

garden house of Ashutosh Dev at Belgachia, also the garden house of a European, Dunkin. The secretary of this national gathering was Ganendranath Tagore, the founder and the assistant secretary was Nabagopal Mitra, and Dwijendranath Tagore was the chief adviser. The first assembly of the Mela was not on a big scale but the organisers took all necessary steps to continue it for the second year. For better performance of the Mela, the organisers established a national society called Jatiya Sabha. The eminent members of this national society were divided into six groups to look after the different aspects of the Mela's progress throughout the year (25–6).

The work of the Mela gained momentum from the second assembly, which took place on 30 Chaitra Bengali Samvat 1274 or 12 April 1868 at Belgachia. Pandit Bhavashankar Vidyaratna inaugurated the assembly. The assembly started with the singing of the song '*Sobe mile bharat-santan, gao bharater jai-gan*; come together India's children, sing India's victory-song', composed by Satyendranath Tagore (1842–1923), the second elder brother of Rabindranath Tagore (27).

All the subsequent assemblies of the Mela were inaugurated with this song and it gained so much popularity that virtually it became the national song of the nascent nationalists till '*Vande Mataram*' by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee replaced it. The secretary of the second assembly, Ganendranath Tagore, stated the aim of the gathering at the inaugural session:

The foremost aim of this gathering is to bring together the Hindus at the end of the year. ... This annual meeting of ours is not for mundane religious purposes, not for material enjoyments, not for entertainment or merriment, but it is for our country, it is for our motherland, Bharata. ... One of the major drawbacks of Indians is that we always seek the help of the nobility in whatever we do. Is this not something we should be greatly ashamed of? Are we not humans? ... That is why the second aim of this Mela is to infuse and establish the spirit of self-reliance amongst Indians (27).

The assistant secretary of the assembly, Nabagopal Mitra, spoke about the development of Indians in the previous year in the fields of the state, commerce, health, education, and society. All speeches, lectures, and other sessions were conducted in the mother tongue, Bengali. Among other things, the assembly had the recitation of Bengali and Sanskrit patriotic poems, patriotic songs, and group singing. The events of the assembly were divided into different sessions as general session, development session, education session, music session, exhibition session, and so on.

Two songs became popular in this assembly, '*Malina mukha chandra ma bharata tomari*; O mother India, your moon face is gloomy', composed by Dwijendranath Tagore and '*Laj-jay bharata-yash gaibo ki kore*; ashamed that I am, how shall I sing India's glory', composed by Ganendranath Tagore. On this occasion, an exhibition of national arts, handicrafts, cottage

industries, chemical experiments, paintings, and so on was arranged. Among the various kinds of indigenous arts and crafts exhibited were beautiful thread-work of jute seat-mats, shoes, cotton-bags, doormats, bead-works, different kinds of moulds, women's vanity articles, ornaments and ivory dolls made by local women. Also on display were towels and dusters, dusting cloths made by the inmates of the Alipore Jail, fruits and vegetables, and beautiful idols made by the potters of Navadvip.

The special attraction of this assembly was the exhibition of Indian gymnastics by the local wrestlers. There was the display of various exercises, stick fighting, wrestling, and sword fighting that amazed the audience. Many, especially the European spectators, were surprised to see the different manoeuvres with the husking pedals on the fulcrum. The crowd consisted of people from all castes, sects, and religions. Everyone enjoyed the elegant exhibition of native talents (28–9).

The Mela was supported mainly by the members of the Tagore family, who were also the main financiers. Among the eminent persons who took interest in the Mela were Rajnarayan Basu, Manomohan Bose, Shivanath Shastri, Raja Kamal Krishna Bahadur, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Krishnadas Pal, Nilkamal Bandopadhyay, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Pyari Charan Sarkar.

At the end of the second assembly of the Mela, the well-known poet and dramatist Manomohan Bose, who was an enthusiastic worker of the Mela, said in his speech:

If we analyse with a calm mind, we would understand that today we have come to a novel mart of merriment. Our capital is simplicity and non-competition. We have come here to buy the great seed of unity in exchange for this capital. When sown in the field of the nation, irrigated with proper effort, and given the heat of



Umesh Chandra Dutta (1840–1907)

enthusiasm, that seed will grow into a beautiful tree. It will be so beautiful that when from the midst of its leaves of national pride, the great white flower of fortune will blossom, its beauty and fragrance would exhilarate the whole of India. At this moment, I do not find courage to tell the name of the fruit of this tree; the people of other nations call this fruit 'independence' and enjoy its taste of elixir (29).

A detailed account of the second assembly of the Mela was published in many newspapers and periodicals.

The third assembly of the Hindu Mela took place at the same place, on the day of Chaitra-Sankranti, Bengali Samvat 1275 or 1869. This assembly was larger in size and better organised. It had a broader national appeal and the specimens of arts and crafts on display were from Banaras, Jaipur, Lucknow, Patna, and Kashmir. Some women were awarded silver medals with the seal of 'Hindu-Mela' for their arts and crafts works (31–4).

The fourth assembly of the Hindu Mela took place on Falgun-Sankranti, Bengali Samvat 1276, 12 and 13 February 1870, instead of April, because of the hot weather in the month of Chaitra.

However, in spite of quoting reports from *Samachar Chandrika* of 21 February 1870 and *Amritabazar Patrika* of 24 February 1870 that the assembly was held on Falgun-Sankranti, Jogesh Chandra Bagal wrongly says that it was held on Chaitra-Sankranti (35–6). The *Amritabazar Patrika* dated 24 February 1870 reads: ‘Since this year the Mela was held in the month of Falgun and not Chaitra, the participants did not feel much discomfort due to heat’ (36).

From 1870, Dwijendranath Tagore and Devendranath Mallick became secretaries of the Mela, because of the untimely death of Ganendranath Tagore on 16 May 1869. In addition to an extensive exhibition of native arts and crafts, Sitanath Babu demonstrated a new self-made machine for mass production of thread in a much lesser time than the traditional spinning wheel. He also exhibited a self-made loom and an air-pump. It was a show of indigenous industry. Many Europeans, Bengalis, Biharis, Muslims, and people of different castes and places gathered there. There were approximately twenty thousand spectators and everyone was delighted and highly praised the exhibition, which definitely roused the self-esteem of the native people (35–6).

The Hindu Mela was historically important because, though in a small scale, it established that no nation could progress without the self-confidence of its people. The Hindu Mela was close to the hearts of people.

The fifth assembly of the Mela took place during 30 Magh to 1–2 Falgun, 11–13 February, 1871 in the garden of Hiralal Seal at Nainan, about nine kilometres from Calcutta (37). The sixth (1872) and seventh (1873) assemblies of the Mela were well organised and well attended. Rajnarayan Basu was the chairperson of the sessions on the third day of the seventh assembly on 17 February 1873 (45).

The National Paper printed in its issue of 19–23 February, 1873:

The mela has completed its seventh year. If a greater measure of public sympathy be accorded to it [it] may grow to more useful purpose and in a certain sense, a Representative Institution. It may ultimately become a power in the nation, an innocent annual gathering of the people—the occasion of our rejoicing, a loving examination of the nation’s advance in art and science, and an appreciation of treasures bequeathed to us by our ancestors. Let us hope that the Mela will be a binding power endearing the Hindu name to the Aryan people wherever scattered through India (ibid.).

The Mela’s assistant secretary, Nabagopal Mitra, always laid much emphasis on gymnastics, wrestling, and other traditional sports. In 1868, the second year of the Mela, he opened a gymnastic school at his residence in Cornwallis Street, Calcutta, and named it ‘National Gymnasium’. It became very popular and within a few years, the school produced a number of teachers of physical education.⁴ In the early 1870s according to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal George Campbell’s new policy on education, European-style gymnasiums were to be set up in government schools and colleges.⁵

Nabagopal Mitra, realising the usefulness and necessity of the European equipment, tried to adapt them to the Indian tradition in his school. Therefore, at the National Gymnasium, besides physical exercises, wrestling, sword-fighting, and stick-wielding, modern equipment like bar and trapeze were introduced. Mitra even employed a British trainer to train the Bengali Hindu pupils in European-style gymnastics. In 1872, the National Gymnasium was merged into another institution for ‘cultivation of Arts, Music and for physical Training’⁶ named ‘National School’, which functioned from 13 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. This school was instrumental

in imparting the first lessons of nationalism to some future leaders of India such as Bipin Chandra Pal, Sundari Mohan Das, and Raj Chandra Chaudhuri (85).

Swami Vivekananda, then Narendranath Datta, was closely involved with the Hindu Mela and also the National Gymnasium, right from its inception. 'Narendranath helped Nabagopal Mitra, who was a relative on his mother's side and a member of the Adi Brahmo Samaj, with a national gymnasium which was formed to cultivate the physical vitality and manliness of Bengali youth.'⁷ Bhupendranath Datta, Swami-ji's younger brother writes: 'Narendranath used to frequent the Hindu Mahamela of Nabagopal Mitra. ... The ladies of our house used to send their handicrafts at the exhibition of the Mahamela.'⁸ Swamiji's biographers write:

Naren started a gymnasium in the courtyard of the house, where his friends used to do regular physical exercise. This venture flourished for some time, until one of his cousins broke his arm. Again the uncle showed lack of sympathy, this time destroying the equipment of the gymnasium. Thereupon Naren, along with his friends, joined the gymnasium of a neighbour, Shri Navagopal Mitra. Finding this suitable place, which was situated on Cornwallis Street, Naren applied himself earnestly to physical culture, and gradually attained proficiency in lathi-play (playing with long sticks), fencing, rowing, swimming, wrestling and other sports. Once, at a physical training show and handicrafts fair, he carried off first prize for boxing—a handsome silver butterfly. At the same fair one of his sisters won the first prize for needlework on velvet.⁹

The biography states further:

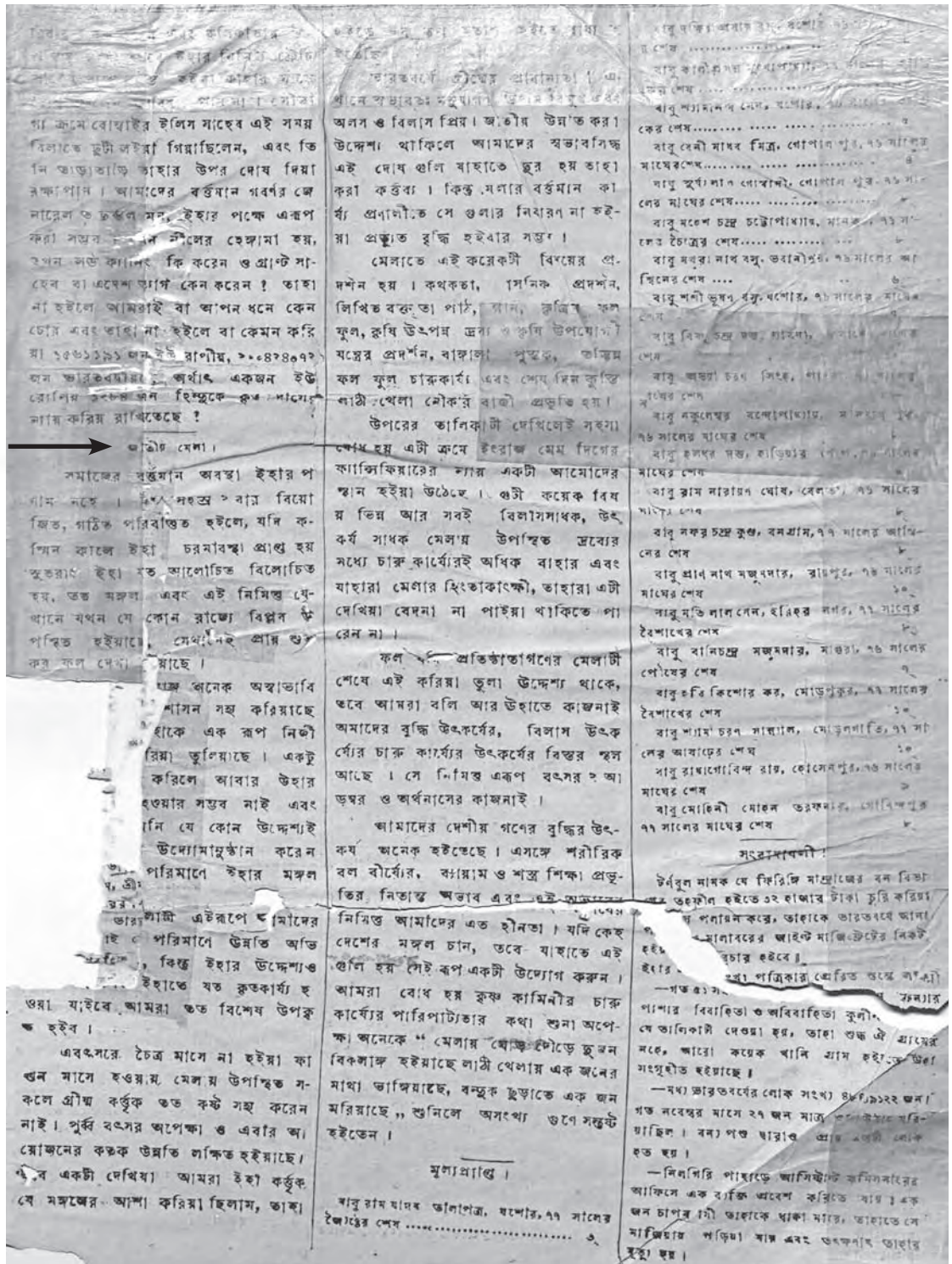
As we have seen earlier, Naren and his friends were members of the gymnasium of Shri Navagopal Mitra, who had practically left its management in their hands. One day while they were trying to set up a very heavy trapeze, a



*Ruins of the National School at
13, Cornwallis Street, Calcutta*

crowd gathered to watch. Amongst them was an English sailor, whom Naren asked to help. But as the obliging sailor was lifting the trapeze to help the boys, it fell and knocked him unconscious. Nearly everyone but Naren and one or two of his friends disappeared from the scene, thinking the sailor had been killed. Immediately Naren tore a piece off his dhoti, bandaged the wound, sprinkled the sailor's face with water, and fanned him gently. When the sailor regained consciousness, Naren and his friends lifted him up and took him to a neighbouring schoolhouse. A doctor was sent for, and Navagopal Mitra was informed. After a week's nursing the sailor recovered, and Naren presented him with a modest purse, which he had collected from his friends (138).

The eighth assembly of Hindu Mela took place at Parsi Gardens in Calcutta during 11–15 February 1874¹⁰ and the ninth assembly took place in the same place during 11–15 February, 1875 with the persistent efforts of Nabagopal Mitra. Rajnarayan Basu was the president of the ninth assembly of the Mela held in 1875 (50). Till recently it was believed that Rabindranath Tagore, who was then a boy of fourteen years, composed a Bengali poem on India, '*Hindu mela upahar*; the gift of Hindu Mela', which he delivered from memory in the opening session of the ninth assembly. The melodious but firm tune of his voice charmed the audience. This



Amrita Bazar Patrika, Vol 3, Issue 2; 24 February 1870 Containing an Account of the Fourth Assembly of Hindu Mela

poem was published in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 25 February 1875 (52). However, according to recent findings, Rabindranath Tagore recited his other poem '*Hok bharater jai*; let there be India's glory', written on the occasion of the Hindu Mela in the opening ceremony of the ninth assembly (11).

The period between the ninth and tenth assemblies of the Hindu Mela was very significant in the history of Bengal. In this year, two political societies were born. The Indian League was established on 25 September 1875 by Sisir Kumar Ghosh.¹¹ Surendranath Banerjee and Anandamohan Bose established the Indian Association or Bharat Sabha on 26 July 1876.¹² The young educated society of Bengal was greatly moved with the inspiring speeches of these political leaders.¹³

The tenth assembly of Hindu Mela took place on 19 and 20 February 1876 at the garden house of Raja Badan Chand in Tala (53). In this assembly, there was a conflict between some Bengali young men and some Anglo-Indians. Bipin Chandra Pal, who was a student of the National Gymnasium, Sundari Mohan Das, and Jitendranath Banerjee were involved in the quarrel. Bipin Chandra Pal was arrested by the police and he had to pay a fine of twenty rupees (55). Bipin Chandra Pal gives a detailed account of the National Gymnasium and this incident in his autobiography:

Babu Nabagopal was known among his contemporaries as 'National' Mitra. He was the editor and proprietor also, I believe, of an English weekly, called the *National Paper*. It was written in almost schoolboy English. Nabagopal Babu was proud even of his ungrammatical and unidiomatic English. 'English', he would say, 'is not my mother tongue, and though I may use the vehicle of this foreign language under practical compulsion, I feel no call to waste my time and energy in trying to master

the senseless idioms of it'. His hobby, however, was the development of the physique of the rising generation of his countrymen. Sir George Campbell, Lieut. Governor of Bengal in the sixties of the last century, had introduced physical culture as part of school training in Bengal. Gymnastic classes were opened in the government schools all over the province in pursuance of the new education policy of the government. Babu Nabagopal Mitra threw himself enthusiastically into this physical training of our boys. He had a physical training or gymnastic school run by himself at 1, Sankar Ghosh's Lane, which a fairly large number of university youngmen, particularly those coming from the *mufassil* districts, regularly attended. Here we had not only the full paraphernalia of gymnastic exercise of the British schools, horizontal, parallel bars, etc., but Nabagopal Babu added to these our national exercises of wrestling, *lathi*, dagger and sword-play. These premises were not suited to rifle practice, but that was also in Nabagopal Babu's programme. That was before the passing of Lord Lytton's Arms Act. The younger members of Maharishi Devendra Nath's family, particularly Babu Jyotirindra Nath Tagore, were very much interested in the movement of Nabagopal Babu, and it received, I think, substantial financial support from them. Nabagopal Babu's family residence was in Cornwallis Street at the junction of that street with Sankar Ghosh's Lane. When I first made his acquaintance he was living as an independent gentleman, devoting not only his time and energy but also practically the whole of his financial resources to the promotion of the cause of physical education of his people and the revival of national arts and industries. He seems to have come very soon to the end of his personal resources and was compelled to take service in the Calcutta Corporation as licence Officer. But he continued to run his hobby and finally organised the first Bengalee circus in which he lost his all, and passed away in the eighties of the last century almost a penniless man.

অমৃত বাজার পত্রিকা

পূর্ব-মধ্যপ্রদেশ সার্বভৌম, ভারত সরকার, কলকাতা, ১৯১৭ সালের ১৫ই ফেব্রুয়ারি। অমৃত বাজার, পৃষ্ঠা ১৫৫, ভারত সরকার, কলকাতা, ১৯১৭ সালের ১৫ই ফেব্রুয়ারি।

১ম ভাগ ১ম পৃষ্ঠা ১৫৫ ১৯১৭ সালের ১৫ই ফেব্রুয়ারি ১৫৫ পৃষ্ঠা ১৫৫

সহি শিরে ব্রহ্মের স্বাধীন,
গাধিল উদ্যোগে দ্য "ব্রহ্ম বালা";
যা কিছু ভায়েত মধুর কথার,
মকদি তুমি যা কোমারি কুপার।
এস যা জ্ঞান দেখা দেখি একবার,
এখন প্রভি চরণ সোয়ার,
এই দাম দেই তব রূপ্য বলে,
তাসি অধিগার মননের জলে;
গাধিল মাসিকা "মুখে সন্দিহী"
গেয়ে মনর "এলা" কাহিনী।
দেখাতে মানবের এবার বাসনা,
ত্রিদিব ডবন শোভার মননা,
কিন্তু যা জাননী চলি এখন,
অমৃত সাগর করিয়া মধুর,
তালি জগতুদি আশু শির জন।
তুমি যা করণ করিত তিরসে
তা হলে বাসনা পুড়িবে মধুরে।
"শেখরীণে" বসি যদি নর মাল্য
লাজাব ভাষার শ্রুতকমল গলা
জুড়িবে অধর মধুর মানে।

হিন্দু মেলায় উপহার।

১
বিষয় শিখরে শিল্পাঙ্গনপতি,
গান বাস-অবিরীণা হাতে করি—
কীপারে পঙ্কজ শিখর কানন,
কীপারে নীহার-নীল বার।

২
সুখ শিখর শুভ তরুণতা,
শুভ মদীকহ মনোরম পাতা।
বিষয় শিখর শিল্পাঙ্গনপতি,
নিরবে নিম্নে বহিরা বার।

৩
পূর্ণিমা রাত-টালের ক্রিগ—
রক্ত শবির শিখর, কানন,
সাগর-উরতি, হরিত-প্রান্তর,
প্রান্তিক করিয়া গভীরে বার।

৪
অজাতিয়া বীণা কবির মাস,
"কেন্দ্রে"ভারত কেন হুই হার,
আবার হাসিল। হাদিগার দিন
আছে কি এখনো এ ঘোর মুখে!

৫
দেখিতাম ঘরে মধুরার তীরে,
পূর্ণিমা নিশিবে বিন্যাস মদীক
বিলাসের তরে রক্তা হুইকি;
কাটোনে মুখে নিম্নে নিশি।

৬
তখন ও হাসি মেগেহিগো ভাল,
তখন ও বেশ নেমেহিগো ভাল,
শ্রমণ লাগিত মরগ মনন,
মক উরবার কেন্দ্রে মত।

৭
তখন পূর্ণিমা বিতরিত মধু,
মধুর উহার হাসি দিত মধু,
প্রান্তিক শোভা মধু বিতরিত
পাখীর কল্লন লাগিত ভাল।

৮
এখন তা মত, এখন তা মত,
এখন গেছে সে মধুর মনন।
বিষয় অমৃতের ঘেহে এখন,
হাসি পুদি আর লাগে না ভাল।

৯
অমৃত আবার আশুক এখন,
মক হলে মধু ভারত কানন,
কেন্দ্রে সূর্য হোক মেঘে নিম্নে
প্রান্তিক পৃথলী ছিঁড়িয়া মত।

১০
অমৃত আবার আশুক এখন,
মক হলে মধু ভারত কানন,
কেন্দ্রে সূর্য হোক মেঘে নিম্নে
প্রান্তিক পৃথলী ছিঁড়িয়া মত।

১১
অমৃত আবার আশুক এখন,
মক হলে মধু ভারত কানন,
কেন্দ্রে সূর্য হোক মেঘে নিম্নে
প্রান্তিক পৃথলী ছিঁড়িয়া মত।

১২
অমৃত আবার আশুক এখন,
মক হলে মধু ভারত কানন,
কেন্দ্রে সূর্য হোক মেঘে নিম্নে
প্রান্তিক পৃথলী ছিঁড়িয়া মত।

১৩
অমৃত আবার আশুক এখন,
মক হলে মধু ভারত কানন,
কেন্দ্রে সূর্য হোক মেঘে নিম্নে
প্রান্তিক পৃথলী ছিঁড়িয়া মত।

১৪
অমৃত আবার আশুক এখন,
মক হলে মধু ভারত কানন,
কেন্দ্রে সূর্য হোক মেঘে নিম্নে
প্রান্তিক পৃথলী ছিঁড়িয়া মত।

১৫
অমৃত আবার আশুক এখন,
মক হলে মধু ভারত কানন,
কেন্দ্রে সূর্য হোক মেঘে নিম্নে
প্রান্তিক পৃথলী ছিঁড়িয়া মত।

১৬
অমৃত আবার আশুক এখন,
মক হলে মধু ভারত কানন,
কেন্দ্রে সূর্য হোক মেঘে নিম্নে
প্রান্তিক পৃথলী ছিঁড়িয়া মত।

১৭
অমৃত আবার আশুক এখন,
মক হলে মধু ভারত কানন,
কেন্দ্রে সূর্য হোক মেঘে নিম্নে
প্রান্তিক পৃথলী ছিঁড়িয়া মত।

১৮
অমৃত আবার আশুক এখন,
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In 1876 I joined the gymnastic class at 1, Sankar Ghosh's Lane. Early in the spring of this year, the Hindu Mela was held in the garden house of Raja Badan Chand at Tala. I cannot say if that garden house stands still. It was here at this *mela* that I first came into conflict with Anglo-Indian arrogance and police aggression. There was a row over a small incident with which I was directly concerned. I was sitting on a chair, waiting for some gymnastic performances which were advertised to be demonstrated at the *mela*. A European or Eurasian came from behind, and tried to shove me off my chair, as he wanted it, I subsequently heard, for a lady companion of his. If he had politely asked me to accommodate his lady friend, I would without the least hesitation have given my chair to her. Instead of this he came and rudely asked me to get up and let him have the chair. I naturally refused and then he tried to force me out of it. That was the origin of the row. The youthful students among the assembled crowd soon came up and fell into the fray. The police immediately followed and took sides with the European or Eurasian who had started the quarrel. A general melee between the students and the police followed. Police reinforcements were immediately called up from the Cossipore Thana. The students, however, took their stand upon a heap of brickbats lying in the garden and from there for a considerable time kept the police at bay. Surendra Nath's younger brother, Jitendra Nath, now Captain Banerjee, played a very prominent part in this drama. He was a famous athlete of our time, and rendered an excellent account of himself in this fight. Struck, however, by one of the police brickbats, he saw blood running from his head. Finding that with this blood on his clothes it would be impossible for him to escape arrest, he jumped over the wall of the garden and laying a policeman who went to catch him flat on the ground by a kick, he walked home quietly via Dum Dum. And when some friends of mine went to Mr Surendra Nath Banerjee at about dusk or

Rabindranath Tagore's Bengali Poem, 'Hindu Melar Upahar'
Published in Amrita Bazar, 25 February 1875

after an interval of about a couple of hours, to inform him of my arrest and that of some other friends, they found young Jitendra Nath, who was, I think, reading in the second year class at that time, pouring over, of all books, Taylor's *Ancient History*, and asking them what was all this row about.

The whole thing ended in a police case. I was one of the accused. The charge was rioting and obstructing a public servant in the discharge of his duties. Both these charges were as false as false could be. None of us created the riot, and we did not obstruct any public servant in the discharge of his duties. Considering, however, the seriousness of the charge, my father was informed by wire about it, and asked to send sufficient funds to arrange for my defence. My father was very much put out by the information. He could not imagine that unless I had gone absolutely to evil ways there could be any clash between myself and the police, and so he refused to help me. But my father's friends in Sylhet sent the required amount, Rs. 800, counsel's fee for my defence, to the late Babu Jai Govinda Shome, the well-known leader of the Indian Christian community in Calcutta, who came from my own native district of Sylhet and had for a time, after taking his law degree, practised in the District Judge's Court at Sylhet. The case was tried by the Police Magistrate of Sealdah, Raja Harendra Krishna Bahadur, who convicted me and sentenced me to pay a fine of Rs. 20. Mr Piffard, my counsel, after the court had delivered its verdict and sentence, came up to me and said, 'Well, young man, you need not be ashamed of this conviction. No other court would convict you. You acted as a gentleman.' At the end of the trial, Mr Shome sent the whole record of the case to my father, who had it translated, and after going through it he is reported to have said that I acted as a gentleman, which was expected of a son of his, and he would spend ten times the amount that had been sent for my defence to defend such



Bipin Chandra Pal (1858–1932)

gentlemanly conduct, should the call come to him again in the future. Though there was loss of some money, it involved no dishonour, and in his values of things honour stood immeasurably higher than money.¹⁴

The eleventh assembly of Hindu Mela in 1877 drew a smaller number of people. A personal report was published in *Sadharani* of 4 March 1877: 'All there was to see were a cloth-making machine, locally made matchbox, ink, and soap.'¹⁵ After the establishment of *Indian League* and *Indian Association*, Hindu Mela started to lose its uniqueness. Nabagopal Mitra's dream of reviving Hindu India failed to gather support from the new generation of the middle class to whom it did not appear politically sound. The new taste of political incitement moved the educated Bengalis away from the Hindu Mela, which was purely a non-political organisation (56).

The twelfth assembly of the Mela was held

in 1878 and the thirteenth assembly was held in 1879. Both were held on the Saraswati Puja day instead of Magh-Sankranti. The sessions and exhibitions of the Mela started losing their popularity. Furthermore, the Tagore family, which used to enrich and lead the Mela intellectually and also significantly fund it, had lost interest in the Mela. The fourteenth assembly of the Mela held in 1880 was probably the last assembly of the Hindu Mela. Thus, unable to cope with the new and complex demands of the 1880s, the Hindu Mela gradually faded away. But the spirit of *swadeshi* that the Mela could arouse in the minds of the Bengalis survived and it got a more organised platform in the Swadeshi Movement of the twentieth century. Thus, the Hindu Mela was a socio-cultural organisation aimed at reviving the glory of Indian civilisation, mobilising the Hindus, especially the youth, and cultivating the national language and ideas, so as to fight the cultural colonisation of the British. Hindu Mela's contributions to the nation were:

- Fusing distinct Hindu nationalities into a common Hindu national identity.
- Evoking public love and respect for the nation, arousing the spirit of self-respect and self-confidence of the native people, which had sunk to the bottom by the long British dependence.
- For the first time, songs were composed and sung on the motherland, *swadesh*, including the national song.
- Developing national arts, sciences, and industry.

This was an early attempt to fight British Imperialism, the first step towards the freedom movement leading to the birth of the National Congress twenty years later.



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The Status of the World

Swami Satyapriyananda

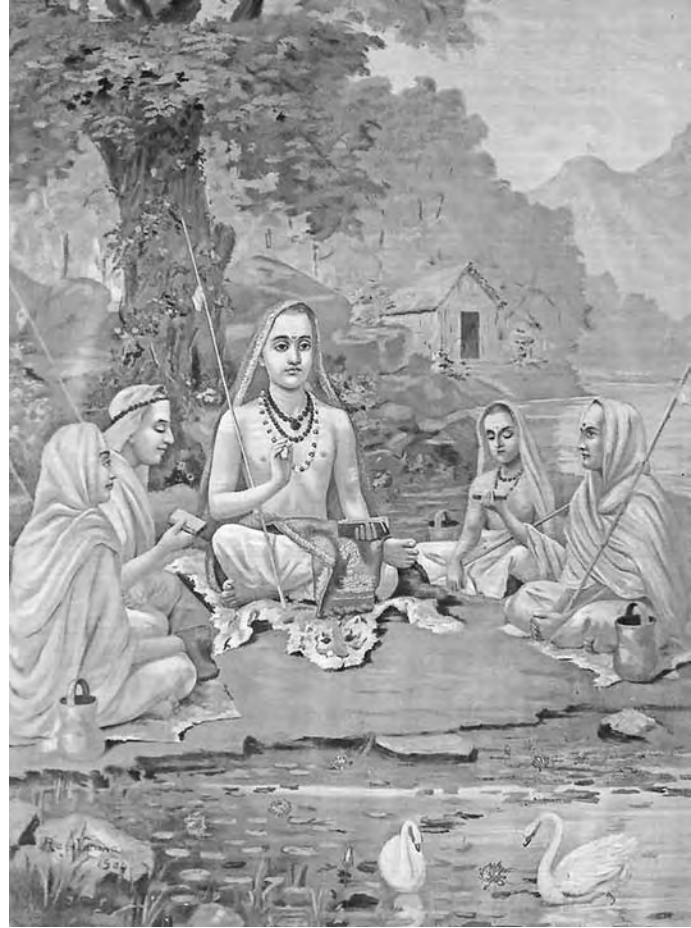
ADVAITA VEDANTA of Acharya Shankara is indeed a masterpiece. It is a grand philosophy that presents a way of life where the world is viewed as 'an unreal superimposition on Brahman, which alone is Real'. However, we have to consider the impact of this philosophical stand on the life of people, especially Indians.

Brahman alone is *nitya*, real or eternal; the world is *anitya*, untrue or unreal like a dream. In the light of the experience of Sri Ramakrishna stated in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, *nitya* ought to be translated as 'changeless Reality' and *anitya* should be translated as 'changing Reality'.¹

Science accepts that neither matter nor energy can be created or destroyed; this is the eternality aspect of the world. But matter and energy can be changed from one form to another; this is the changing aspect of that eternality. When reactants combine to give a product, all the elements on the reactants side are there on the product side too but in a different state of combination. Added to this, the reaction may be exothermic, releasing heat, or endothermic, absorbing heat. Thus we have thermo-chemical reactions. In Brahman there is no change; it is the unchanging aspect of Reality. In the world of perceptions, we encounter the changing aspect of Reality. But both are eternal.

Experience in the Three States

Every individual passes through the three states of existence: waking, dream, and dreamless sleep. In the dreamless sleep state, one



'Shankaracharya' by Raja Ravi Varma

experiences immense joy on account of our being the Atman but does not know anything owing to ignorance or *ajnana*: '*Sukham aham asvapsam; na kinchit avedisham iti*; I slept happily, I did not know anything'.² However, there was the 'experiencer' behind this experience. That experiencer is the same experiencer who, in waking state, recalls the experience in the

dreamless sleep. Some counter this by saying that there was ignorance in addition to the experiencer, and hence it is dual. To this objection, the Vedantin says that even this ignorance is transcended in *turiya*, the fourth state. Hence the experience is non-dual.

Acharya Shankara says in his *Vivekachudamani* that maya is neither *sat*, real nor *asat*, unreal nor both *sat* and *asat*; in fact, it is *anirvachaniya*, inexpressible. Maya is not *sat* as it can be transcended; it is not *asat* seeing that the world, a product of maya, exists; and maya is not both *sat* and *asat*, which being contradictory like day and night, cannot co-exist. Hence the inexpressibility of the nature of maya. One must observe here that Brahman is beyond the reach of the mind and speech; it is also inexpressible and the only Reality according to Vedanta.

The mind has a wonderful capacity to project the world around us. One may like to question this. When viewed properly, one can see that what one perceives is the image of what is before that person and not what that thing, without the perceiver, is. Thus, we live in a world of images; it is ideational. Furthermore, each perceives differently because of the differences in the perceiver. It is a great solace that will enable us not to be elated or depressed because of how one looks upon us. These are merely perceptions of various minds. It is interesting that the same person may hold different views about a thing or person at different times! Just as several people can have different perceptions about anyone or anything, even so, the same person can change the opinion regarding a person or thing. Thus, there is no absolute standard for judging things and people around us. Moreover, everything and everyone is viewed with respect to our individual self. So we can safely remain insulated from both praise and blame.

In the dream state, this excellent power of the mind projects a world of its own and a perceiver to boot. Thus, there need be no logic behind one's dream nor can we see continuity between successive dreams. In Sri Ramakrishna's parable of a wise man, we see the man unable to decide whether to weep for the death of the several sons he dreamt of in his dream as a king who exists no more on waking, or to weep for the death of his one son in the waking state as a farmer. To the wise man, both waking state experience and dream state experience are equally untrue.³

Thus we have a philosophy that relies entirely on Brahman and Atman, considering identity between Atman and Brahman, and further giving the least importance to the world, dumping it as an unreal superimposition. Even with the destruction of the body, the embodying soul does not die. The wise person, therefore, does not grieve at the death of anyone. To a deluded person who looks upon the world as real, there can be nothing worse than total annihilation. But this does not create even a flutter in the mind of the wise, knowing one.

Is the State of the World Satisfactory?

Consequently, the world, considered an unreal superimposition, is in such a bad shape. No one is happy with the way things are. Everyone has suggestions for improving the state of affairs relating to the world. But this is not possible in a world viewed no more real than a dream.

Hatred, envy, pride, jealousy, competition, terrorism, unethical practices, wars, destruction, and so on, are rampant and one wishes that peace, harmony, prosperity, and everything noble and uplifting should be here on earth. It is in this context that arises the need to look upon the world as real.

Just as one strives to improve oneself physically, mentally, aesthetically, and spiritually to reach a state of perfection, the world also has to be attended to for bringing 'heaven on earth'.

To aid in this, Sri Ramakrishna's viewpoint comes handy. Unlike the *jnani*, who declares the world as being unreal like a dream, the devotees of God look upon this world as the manifestation of the glory of Brahman by its power, Shakti. Brahman and Shakti are identical and hence the view is still non-dual. The *vijnani*, the person of supreme devotion and supreme knowledge, sees that it is Brahman alone that has become the twenty-four cosmic principles, embodied beings, the world, ishvara, and so on (417–8).

The world then becomes worthy of consideration. Whatever happens in the world is a matter that needs to be addressed. As Swami Turiyananda said, the world is also established in Truth.⁴ As Swami Brahmananda asked, 'Show me the line of demarcation where matter ends and spirit begins.'⁵ That is how one steeped in the continuous perception of Consciousness views existence. As the experience of Sri Ramakrishna reveals, Consciousness is, as it were, peeping through the sense organs just as if the human body is a pillowcase.⁶ Sri Ramakrishna experienced Consciousness everywhere: in the image, in the articles used for worship, in all beings. He said that the Divine Mother, Shakti, exists in all beings including in those of ill-fame or unbecoming conduct. Swami Adbhutananda cornered Swami Turiyananda by pointing out that the same God was behind the cruel Czar of Russia.⁷ The Indian concept of Mother Kali, of whom Swami Vivekananda seldom spoke considering it his 'speciality', has both the benevolent aspects of granting boons and freedom from fear; the image also embodies the terrible aspect of a blood-covered sword and a severed

head from which fresh blood is dripping. In Hindu thought, there is no need for a Satan in addition to a merciful God.

The worshipper of the Divine Mother accepts the dual aspects of Reality in all that she or he sees around. People are suffering and the person of knowledge would say it is all because of one's *prarabdha*, past actions. Swamiji lamented how much the theory of karma had been stretched to make a person insensitive to human suffering basing it on one's *prarabdha* karma. He burst forth saying, if it is one's *prarabdha* that is the cause of her or his suffering, it is *my prarabdha* to remove that suffering. It was a fun-laden incident when a group of people wanted help from Swamiji for the protection of cows but held the view that human beings suffered because of their *prarabdha* and hence deserved no help. While all beings deserve help in times of crisis, a human being, higher in the evolutionary ladder, needs priority attention.⁸

Swamiji got the message of service to humanity in the spirit of worship as well as the revelation that there was a state higher than samadhi as conveyed in his favourite song: 'All that exists art Thou' (1.162). This is the perception that is required today to usher into existence an ideal society consisting of enlightened citizens. Just as a bird flies with two wings, even so one's liberation through spiritual practices needs to be coupled with enrichment of the society through the cultivation of a values system. Otherwise, there will be a depletion of values all around and one cannot expect to raise oneself in such an environment. What is necessary is a harmonious growth within and all around.

India has always had the glory of being a spiritual land. And yet she had to tread the path of foreign subjugation for a thousand years. One needs to introspect and conclude that spirituality is not everything. As Swamiji remarked, 'No

religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not in fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny in the shape of doctrines of Paramarthika and Vyavaharika.”⁹

Seeing the progress and prosperity of the Western nations and being told that it was so because of the superiority of Christian religion and Western culture, Indians began to imitate the West little realising that a sheep in lion’s skin remains a sheep and not a lion. They failed to see that what was needed was the application of religion in day-to-day life.

Swamiji started the Ramakrishna Mission on 1 May 1897 with the objective of raising the condition of the women and the masses. Some thought that it was a blind imitation of the Western methods. It was not so, for the West had no answer to the question of utility in social service activities. The gene being selfish, unselfishness has no place in it. Atman is the source of unselfishness.

Swamiji took up the national ideal of *tyaga*, renunciation, and *seva*, service, and coined the motto of the Mission’s activities: ‘*Atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha*; for one’s own liberation and for the good of the world’. It is here that the world finds a meaningful status. The service activities appear to be humanitarian but in reality there is the basis for worship by seeing God immanent in all existence. The worship was of different types. Physical: relief, rehabilitation, and welfare. Health and hygiene: hospitals and dispensaries. Intellectual: libraries, schools, colleges, technical institutes, and universities. And spiritual: lectures, question and answer sessions, publication of

spiritual literature, journals, worship in temples, and spiritual initiation of those eager to evolve spiritually.

In course of time, several centres came into existence throughout India and the rest of the world for spreading the ideas and ideals of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swamiji, taking guidance from the wise counsel of the monks of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

The theme for these activities is the re-building of the nation along national lines of spirituality. Today, India occupies a place of prestige among the conglomeration of nations. As Swamiji envisioned, the rise of India will be far more glorious than ever before.

Can anyone deny that this is becoming possible because of the deification of the world and worshipping the immanent God? Could we have even visualised this pinnacle of glory by looking upon the world as an unreal superimposition?



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Swami Vivekananda's Catchphrase: 'Love of Death'

Swami Kritarthananda

ON THE EVE of his second voyage to the West in June 1899, Swami Vivekananda gave a brief but deeply impregnated address to the young sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Order. In those telling words of address, which may be treated as a 'Parthian shot' to the posterity, Swamiji conveyed a revolutionary idea in his definition of 'renunciation'. The speech goes as follows:

There is no time to deliver a long discourse on 'Renunciation', but I shall very briefly characterise it as *the love of death*. Worldly people love life. The Sannyasin is to love death. Are we to commit suicide then? Far from it. For suicides are not lovers of death, as it is often seen that when a man trying to commit suicide fails, he never attempts it for a second time. What is the love of death then? We must die, that is certain; let us die then for a good cause. Let all our actions—eating, drinking, and everything that we do—tend towards the sacrifice of our self. You nourish your body by eating. What good is there in doing that if you do not hold it as a sacrifice to the well-being of others? You nourish your minds by reading books. There is no good in doing that unless you hold it also as a sacrifice to the whole world. For the whole world is one; you are rated a very insignificant part of it, and therefore it is right for you that you should serve your millions of brothers rather than aggrandise this little self.¹

At first sight, such a definition of renunciation may raise many brows due to its seeming diversion from the conventional idea of renunciation. But Swamiji's sagacious vision only echoed

the true sense of sacrifice upheld by the best brains of India since time immemorial. In order to differentiate the idea of renunciation from conventional 'sannyasa', the Sanskrit word for a life of sacrifice, Sri Krishna coined two words, *tyaga* and 'sannyasa' in the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Gautama Buddha exemplified in his own life what he preached, namely, selfless service to humanity by the ochre-robed monks. The *Hitopadesha*, a primer on the art of happy living, states clearly that when death is inevitable, it is better to sacrifice oneself for a noble cause.²

Allusions from the Scriptures

Why should one love death? Death is the very antithesis of life, the negation of an affirmation. The very idea of death hits us to the core of our being because no one seems to love one's own extinction. We all like to bask in the light of life. Of the four sights that drove the young prince Gautama mad, one was the vision of death—the inevitable, unavoidable, irrefutable truth of the world. Why, then, did Swamiji place such a 'horrible' ideal before posterity? To put the question in another way, what is the secret behind this 'love of death'?

In order to get the answer to this question, we have to recall two stories from our scriptures. One is of the prodigious Nachiketa in the *Katha Upanishad*. In order to keep his father's words, he went straight to the abode of the king of death and asked him to his face, among other boons,

the age-old conundrum of existence beyond death. The story, being well known to all, need not be narrated here in full. The other story, narrated in the *Mahabharata*, *Devi Bhagavata*, and *Brahmavaivarta Purana*, depicts an austere and chaste wife, Savitri, following the king of death who took away the soul of her prematurely dead husband. Both the stories point to one fact: even the greatest reality in life cringes in the face of purity, patience, perseverance, and austerity. Even the king of death has to make exceptions before such a personality. Death, terrible as it may look to the ordinary soul, opens the secret gates of life to the truly aspiring soul with a sharp and pure intellect born out of chastity.

The two well-known stories from our scriptures also bear out the fact that even death can be encountered face to face. This point may seem otiose in the face of the alarming increase in modern times in terrorism, human bombs, suicide squads and, above all, the tendency to bring an end to life at the slightest provocation. All these clearly tell us the stories of desperate bids to stake young and innocent lives. Either through indoctrination, brainwashing, or overt or covert authoritarianism, innocent people are decoyed into gory acts of violence leading to death. People having vested interests play childish games with death without knowing the grave consequences. But be it as terrible as it may, such acts ill afford to be named 'encounter with death'. On the contrary, such people may be classified as lovers of death, as opposed to lovers of life.

According to the eminent German psychologist Erich Fromm, suicides nurture in their hearts the canker of revengeful motive when their self-esteem is shattered by insult or injury in any way. In contrast, the person living a productive life, even when hurt or insulted, does not feel the need to hold fast to the *lex talionis*, the law of retaliation: 'an eye for an eye, a tooth

for a tooth'.³ Hence such examples of death encounter may rather be termed 'reactive violence' or 'revengeful violence' of the unproductive person. It will suit the context fine to make a comparative study here of 'love of death' as laid down by Swamiji and 'love of death' as hallmarked by psychologists.

Death Obsession

This is a characteristic human behaviour pattern directed against life. Psychologically, it may also be called 'death instinct'. People of this nature love to talk glibly about sickness, decay, dirt, death, burial, corpse, destruction, and all such destructive things. The idea and sight of death excites them. They like to dwell in the past and brood over past deeds without launching into any tangible solution. They also like to force, control, dominate, and humiliate others just because these drives imply, according to them, to kill. Again, they have a peculiar tendency to convert even living things into inorganic, inert, mechanical objects that have no sign of life. They feel drawn towards darkness instead of light, night instead of day, death instead of life. Strikingly enough, even people with creative genius may be obsessed with this trait.

There are a host of methods that people with death obsession may adopt as handy alternatives to killing others. In day-to-day life, people do it in many subtle ways, even by evading court trials. By denying them hope, by not recognising talents in others, by being insensitive to the feelings of others, by shielding the beloved one against the dangers of life, by purposely humiliating others, by a studied neglect whipped at the person whom one does not like, and so on.

If a person is essentially pure and beaming with life, how do such traits of 'death' instinct develop in her or him? There may be many reasons for this. One is the environment. If we grow

up in bondage amidst pessimistic, negative-minded, fault-finding, hyper-critical, detracting people whose main task seems to belittle others at any cost; if we are surrounded by people who cut a poor figure with their lifeless, depressive, frightful bearing that lacks enthusiasm; if we are forced by authority to a mechanical, routine life of rote learning; if most of our energy is wasted in defending ourselves against physical and psychological attacks, that is, in fighting against starvation, poverty, deprivation, social injustice, and so on; and above all, if our freedom is threatened every now and then, we run the risk of developing this attitude of obsessing with death. We are, then, unable to relate ourselves meaningfully to life. Some foolish people try to take a shortcut to escape from life by means of either suicide or homicide. Little do they know that thereby things are going to be worse with them and that they will have to start life again from where they left. Life is eternal and one cannot win over it just by evading it by way of such suicidal acts. We have to learn through experiences, mostly bitter and exacting, and come to grips with life in order to win the battle and be happy.

Love of Life

It is diametrically opposite to death obsession. It is an attitude towards life marked by a positive outlook, freedom of thought, word, and deed, controlled and organised life, sympathy to others and readiness to help with a smiling face, absence of complaint, jealousy, grievance, and so on, even under trying circumstances, and above all, a spiritual bearing. Love of life also implies inner harmony and strength. The most remarkable feature in people of this type is that they do not want to avoid responsibility nor do they run away from trying circumstances. All is grist to their mill. They utilise all opportunities for the attainment of higher values of life. When Swamiji was in

the West, he always wore a happy look, cutting jokes now and then, cheerful, simmering with life. The conventional idea that people had about a monk was of a wizened ascetic with a grave face that never knows a smile. Seeing Swamiji's appearance to be diametrically opposite, someone asked him: 'How do you maintain that blissful bearing under all circumstances?' The immediate reply was: 'We are the children of immortality; how can we be grave?'

Clinging to Life

There is still a third kind of attitude to life, namely, a desperate attempt to hold fast onto life. In Sanskrit, this is known as *abhinivesha*. This is nothing but existential fear born out of many painful experiences of death. Since death for an ignorant person is the opposite of life, the idea of death always threatens one's existence. *Abhinivesha* is neither death obsession nor the love for life. Such an attitude comes to one who does not know that birth and death are like high and low tides of the same stream of eternal life. According to Indian scriptures, there are six phases in life known in Sanskrit as *shad-vikaras*: birth, existence, growth, maturity, decay, and death. From this standpoint, death is just a change of phase. After death, the soul does not cease to exist. It takes up another body and experiences the pleasures and pains of life again. This process continues until the soul frees itself of all attachments to life and its modifications with the dawning of true knowledge.

The immense fear that is observed among people of this class is found even in learned persons. So this clinging to life may well be termed as 'fear of death' in contrast to 'love of death'. According to Patanjali, the propounder of yoga philosophy, this inordinate fear forms one of the five *kleshas*, miseries of life, and can be got rid of only in the depth of meditation.⁴

Evasion of Life

The fourth type comprises those who, for good or evil, run away from life. There are several types among the people who evade reality. For the present purposes, we shall discuss only a few of them. One of those types are people who hesitate on the battlefield. Those who are brought up in conducive surroundings, being encored or patted on the back since childhood for every little or insignificant deed, evince such trait. Such people break in the face of a slightest challenge from the outside world. Arjuna, for one, experienced this hesitation when he realised all of a sudden that he had to fight with his beloved relatives and respected elders in the impending battle of Kurukshetra. So he lost his wits and took shelter in Lord Krishna. All the external signs of nervousness that Arjuna developed and spoke of

to Krishna point to this trait. The first chapter of the Gita has been named 'Arjuna-Vishada-Yoga' after the melancholy that had engulfed Arjuna for the time being.

The next sign of evasion is marked by a detour from the mainstream of reality. This is a clever way of evading a problem that one fails to solve. This policy, popularly known as 'red herring principle', is aimed at diverting one's attention to some other unimportant work and rationalising such actions. Arjuna proposed a life of a recluse for himself in preference to the impending fratricide and genocide. This is one of the tricks of mental patients to hoodwink others. The symptoms of migraine, high blood pressure, nervous stomach, fatigue, stuttering, and so on are clear indications in most cases that the shoe pinches elsewhere and the inability of the person to cope with a problem or a situation leads to such expressions.

Another clear sign of such flight from reality is to assume the role of a helpless child who always wants others to do something for oneself. Our present-day civilisation abounds in such people. Their sole motive is to wean the attention of the doctor or the attendant away from the point at issue to themselves. A feeling of helplessness in the face of a problem basic to life is not the sign of a mind in mature command of itself. It is rather the sign of a mind that has given up.

The last technique of evasion of reality is the destruction of oneself, known commonly as 'suicide'. Exactly as pointed out by Swamiji, suicides are never brave, much less lovers of death. It is one thing to run away from life due to unfulfilled desires, ambitions, and so on, and totally another to love death with all its horrible features. In the language of William Shakespeare:



Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange
that men should fear;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.⁵

Suicide may find expression in many ways and with many ulterior motives. One of the motives is to take revenge on others when one cannot possibly do it openly due to weakness. One knows that if one commits suicide, the disgrace and harassment would have to be faced by others, who did not respond favourably to one's meaningless arguments and importunities.

Apart from suicide, there are other self-destructive ways which a person adopts as seemingly better alternatives to suicide. Instead of giving the well-wishers a chance to understand one's problem, the person mutilates oneself in various ways. This tendency stems from the inferiority complex that one is a lowly and insignificant person and that by drawing others' attention to oneself for one's rash acts, one may look a bit superior to others.

Encountering Death

The above was a discussion on some forms of evasion of life. But one thing should be clearly borne in mind. Evasion of life is poles apart from the cool-headed encounter with death. As mentioned earlier, the idea of death chokes the very existence of us; it is an existential problem with us all, and hence it can be solved only at the source level of our very existence, namely, the Atman. But what will the modern human do under the circumstances, given the helpless plight enveloping her or him in the workaday world? Sri Ramakrishna gave a categorical answer to this great riddle of life in his inimitable way.

One day, Mani Mallick, a rich devotee from Calcutta, came to Dakshineswar straight from the cremation ground, having finished the obsequies of his only son who died at a premature age. The shock being too much for the aged man to bear, he sought solace in the holy company of Sri Ramakrishna. Surrounded as usual by devotees, Sri Ramakrishna quietly listened to the hapless news without twitching a nerve while the other devotees, in their vain efforts to console the bereaved father, waxed philosophic and reeled off a lot of garrulous sermons about the inevitability of death, and so on. Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna went into a spiritual mood and stood up, bursting forth into a song with deep spiritual fervour. The tenor of it runs as follows:

To arms! To arms! Oh man, death invades thy home in battle array. Get up into the chariot of faith, and arm thyself with the quiver of wisdom. Draw the mighty bow and hurl, hurl the divine arrow, the holy name of the Mother!⁶

All along Sri Ramakrishna was possessed, as it were, by an inscrutable power. The song ended, and, as he calmed down, Sri Ramakrishna narrated to the devotees his own experience under similar plight. He saw his beloved nephew passing away, the soul leaving the sheath to merge in the Whole, and he felt a great joy. But when the cremators returned in the evening, for all his non-dualistic identification he felt his heart being wrung like a wet towel at the void created in the heart by the death of his nephew. So he mused: 'If such is the condition of a person like me who is bereft of all worldly ties, what could be the depth of pain for the people of the world?' In other words, Sri Ramakrishna, instead of looking down upon the poor creatures wallowing in the mire of the world, placed himself in empathy on a par with the sufferer and relieved the latter of his misery.

Encountering death, the terminal reality, is no child's play. It presupposes a lot of preparation

and discipline. Without a good stock of spiritual weapons and shields of good past impressions called *samskaras*, this encounter ends up only in a tragedy, leaving the soul at the mercy of fate. Even Swamiji, who vociferously inspired his followers to 'love death' as narrated in the beginning of our discussion, was at his wits' end when, during one of his visits to Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna 'touched' him to show the truth behind all manifestations. Much later, Swamiji spoke of his personal experience: 'With my eyes open I saw the walls and everything in the room whirling and vanishing into nothingness. ... The whole universe and my own individuality were at the same time almost lost in a nameless void, which swallowed up everything that is. I was terrified and believed I was face to face with death.'⁷ And as a reaction to such terrible experience of the unknown mystery of the universe, the young Naren cried out in fear, 'What are you doing? I have my parents at home.' (ibid.). It is true that in his later life this very fear of death was transformed into love of death. But he had miles to go yet before he reached that state. Taking this initial experience at its face value, one wonders if such be the case of one who was 'perfect in meditation' in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, what to speak of the common people!

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that grief pushes aside all such concepts as God and the like. People see their near and dear ones die helplessly defying all medical efforts; thereby they happen upon a momentary glimpse of the gaping chasm created by death. They cry pitifully, and are consoled in return by the rest of the family members or friends. They again forget about it all, wipe out their tears, and jump headlong into the world of newer attractions. But death stalks them again behind the common gaze, and takes them unawares. Few, and alas! very few, wake up to the irrevocable reality called death. This

irony of life was marked by the Pandava king Yudhishtira as the greatest wonder of life. In answer to a question as to what is the most astonishing fact of life, he said: 'Every day finds so many souls setting sail for the abode of death; yet those that are left behind take themselves to be immortal. What can be of a greater astonishment in life?'⁸

In the onward march of humanity, in human being's incessant struggle for realisation of the divinity within, innumerable events can be cited to illustrate some less dramatic encounters with death that resulted in a total transformation of the whole personality. Of them, at least one incident bears mention in the present context. Dr Viktor E Frankl, a Jewish psychologist, witnessed the gruelling experience of a day-to-day encounter with death when he was held captive along with a host of other prisoners of war in the Nazi concentration camp during World War II. Each day, a number of captives would be taken to the gas chamber, a veritable abode of death. Nobody knew whose turn would come next. They had but to bide their time counting down for the zero hour. But even amidst that bleak surrounding, Dr Frankl did not give up his wits and went on serving people wholeheartedly while secretly recording his everyday experience in black and white standing face to face with death. Later on, his unique experience, coupled with his insight into the truth of matters, triggered off the discovery of a wonderful aspect of psychology known as logotherapy. Similar was the case of Georg Brochmann, a Norwegian, whose painful experience in the concentration camp along with his son during World War II led to the birth of a memorable book entitled *Humanity and Happiness* that inspired many souls.

When a person realises that everything does not come to an end with death; when one knows for certain that life is eternal and death is just

a change of state like childhood, adolescence, youth, and so on, one realises for the first time that all of one's experiences gathered over so many lives were just a passing show, just as a few cloudlets blown away by the wind cover the blazing sun for a while, and then resume their journey to an unknown destination. It is then that one starts seeing 'the Changeless amidst all changes, the Consciousness of all conscious beings, the One amidst the many that dispenses the desired objects to all'.⁹

Conclusion

'Love of death' was a term frequently used by Swamiji. It meant neither death obsession nor the desperate clinging to life called *abhinivesha*, not even evasion of life. In fact, 'love of death' is by far divorced from the idea conveyed by all these terms. To love God one should have a bracing attitude towards life as also towards death. An affectionate mother not only shows love for her child but also chastises, or even beats the child for the sake of the child's welfare. According to the Hindu faith, God has an infinite number of forms, which can be broadly classified into two groups: the benign and the terrible. Most people love to see God in a benign form, showering blessings on the devotees. But the all-renouncing monks should not stop there. One must dare to see the destructive form of God with the same calmness as one would welcome the benign aspect. The truth of it is that without being desperate and pure to the core of our being, one cannot have a complete vision of God.

Truth is immanent. We fail to realise it due to our blocked mindset. Instead of floating on the surface of things we must go deep into the essence to discover that everything, both sentient and insentient, is enlivened by the presence of God and everything communicates to us in many

ways. Just as even dumb animals communicate with each other by various signs and gestures, similarly there is every moment a communication going on in nature, external as well as internal. If we can listen carefully to that 'still small voice' within, we can palpably feel our identity with the universe in every bit of our dealings with the outside world. Then all the pettiness of the mind like hatred, jealousy, selfishness, and so on will disappear and oneness with others will automatically lead to doing good to them at every moment, at every opportunity. The by-product of such love is a calm bearing of mind and the right use of emotion that otherwise blurs our vision of truth. With that calmness even death can be faced and its secret will be revealed to us. Swamiji expressed this wonderful idea spontaneously in a poem entitled 'Kali, the Mother', which revealed his meditative experience. Writing in a feverish inspiration from his deepest feelings, he completed the depiction with these lines:

Who dares misery love,
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in Destruction's dance,
To him the Mother comes.¹⁰



References

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2. See *Hitopadesha*, 3.100.
3. See Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man* (New York: AMHF, 2010), 24. Also see Exodus 21:22–5.
4. See Patanjali, *Yoga Sutras*, 2.3, 11.
5. William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 2, Scene 2.
6. See Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*, trans. Swami Chetanananda (St Louis: Vedanta Society of St Louis, 2003), 399.
7. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2008), 180.
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Norms of Foundations

Nilanjan Bhowmick

(Continued from the previous issue)

IT IS NO SURPRISE that such a notion of philosophy was dominant *before* the rise of science. Once science arose, the former notion of foundations, through answering the sceptic, while changing nothing else, became far more prominent. The idea that a foundation could affect other subjects became less attractive and seemed wrong. The idea that a foundation should not affect anything else seemed like the right idea. And it has been dominant since.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951)



This is evident in the change in our conception of the foundation of the subject of philosophy in the twentieth century. In giving prominence to the phenomenon of ‘meaning’ and trying to find out what it is, the norm that was operative was that the foundations should not affect anything else. If logical positivism was abandoned, it was because their criterion of meaning as verification was too strict in the sense that it ruled out the laws of science too. That would be intolerable interference. The change to thinking about meaning instead of our sources of knowledge has a certain internal logic to it. In answering the sceptic, we are delivered a world. But we are still not in contact with it, for we need to be confident that our words have some contact with the world. Otherwise the mind and the appearances that appear to it shall swing free of each other. Meaning is what binds the mind to the world. It is the glue that keeps them together. If we did not know what the epistemologist meant by what she or he said, we could not be sure of what they had achieved in defeating the sceptic. The deliverance of the world is not enough; what we need is the world to be capable of being thought by us. And we need to explain how it is capable of being thought by us.

Philosophy of language is really not that far from epistemology in its core insight. It too craves for contact with the world. Whether through Fregean senses, or through propositions sharing their logical form with facts, or through a causal theory of reference, or just making causal

contact with the world necessary for our words to have meaning, philosophers of language have tried to get around answering the sceptic by showing that the sceptic's use of language is enough to make her or him accept the existence of the world.

Philosophers of language have had other ambitions, of course, which do not agree with laying foundations to philosophy in the traditional sense. The traditional sense, if there was one, was to lay a foundation on which the other aspects of philosophy and any other inquiry could build on. But philosophers like Wittgenstein thought of philosophy of language or logic to be resolving every other problem of philosophy, since the problems of philosophy were problems of the grammar of language. Once we have gone through the therapy Wittgenstein offers, we relapse into the use of language and do not plague ourselves with the questions of philosophy. So, if one does philosophy of language, the other aspects of philosophy disappear or *should* disappear. Once they disappear, what is left? The other subjects, like physics, geography, and German literature. Once philosophers have clarified what meaning is, philosophy disappears, the ladder is kicked away, and the rest of inquiry can go on, since contact with the world has been made. So, the only foundation that is required is the one that makes contact between the mind and the world. It makes inquiry into the world possible.

Let us state what norm underlies the exploration into a theory of meaning or at least asking what meaning is. The meta-norm that it should not disturb other sciences or subjects other than the sciences is clear enough and acts as a controlling factor on whatever norm we think of as governing the notion of a foundation.

Norm Three: Since any inquiry is conducted in a language, through propositions, laying a foundation amounts to establishing how

meaning-bearing structures of language come to have meaning.

Every other subject, including philosophy itself in its various branches, assumes that the sentences they employ have meaning. It is the job of those who lay an overarching foundation to tell us what meaning consists in.

A governing meta-norm of Norm Three *apart* from the carry-over of the earlier norm is that meaning should not be some private, un-shareable entity, whatever else it might be. This norm shows the power of the shift towards epistemology away from metaphysics and also the power of the idea that laying a foundation means getting in touch with the world. It is also a narrower governing norm than the rest of the meta-norms because it is specific to the task at hand: it relates to blocking some paths that might strike us as obvious regarding meaning. You cannot go down the road—the one Locke did—that the meaning of a word is some idea in your mind. And this is because the old idea—flowing post Descartes through the veins of philosophers—that the task of philosophy is to somehow come into touch with the world is a key idea that we cannot abandon. For any inquiry to proceed, we need to be in touch with the world. The emphasis of the way we are in touch with the world has shifted when the shift took place from epistemology to philosophy of language. The shift is natural too: to know is to know what is true; to know what is true is to have a propositional attitude; to have a propositional attitude is to grasp a proposition; to grasp a proposition is to grasp meanings. Hence, an account of meaning is more fundamental than an account of why our senses are not deceiving us.

Now, we know that doing philosophy of language does not necessarily banish the rest of philosophy as Wittgenstein may have wanted.

Metaphysical theorising is flourishing today. This does not mean that the philosophy of language is not foundational *enough*. It just means that it had certain wrong ambitions; in trying to give a foundation it also wanted to throw out metaphysics. But reflecting about philosophy of language has been shown to be not independent of metaphysical import. Kripke has argued that identities like 'Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus' are necessary a posteriori statements, because both 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' are rigid designators and because we come to know this particular truth from experience.⁵

If metaphysics is flourishing and epistemology is still going strong, without any help or illumination from philosophy of language, then philosophy of language can hardly be regarded as foundational. It is another contender at best. Maybe finding out what is there, so that inquiry can take place into it, is still the foundational question to ask. Or, maybe they all lay foundations. Each of the subjects of philosophy do their job in laying the bricks, separately, to whatever inquiry is to take place. Philosophy as a whole lays a foundation.

But this is to say nothing informative. It is to say what we tend to believe about philosophy in an intuitive way. We think that philosophy has a certain pre-eminent status in inquiry. The reason may just be that philosophers ask simple, general questions. However, asking simple and general questions cannot be taken as a sign of giving foundations to inquiry simply because we do not have any criteria regarding what is to constitute simplicity and generality. Indeed, most questions of philosophy tend to be fairly difficult to answer and certainly do not occur to people without a certain bent of mind. Simplicity and generality do not mean ease of arriving at a question, ease of thinking, ease of answering, or ease of interest in the question, and they do not tell

us why such questions are supposed to be foundational. To think that philosophy lays foundations is to have made no progress in understanding why we think so and what norms have guided us in thinking so and what it means to lay a foundation to anything. Indeed, to say that philosophy asks simple or general questions is to say that it is engaged in foundational inquiry. It is to add no information to the notion of a foundation to say that philosophy asks simple or general questions. For simplicity and generality are themselves understood, in this connection, as related to foundational thinking.

We have just gone through three different norms that have guided us regarding the nature of foundational thinking and all have been supplanted over the course of history. We should not take this to mean that the norms are wrong or misguided. It should be taken to mean that we are refining and getting clearer about the nature of foundations. We have been, even if intuitively, engaged in what we ourselves describe as foundational thinking. It is instructive that our norms regarding what we take as foundational have changed.

Such norms have faced substantial challenges from philosophers. Ethics and politics, as a combination, are not far behind in claiming foundational status. As a matter of fact, it is highly contentious to think that anything *else* could be foundational. Socrates, in his questioning, does not favour spending our lives asking what the world is made of but how do we understand the nature of virtues. The emphasis was on how to live the best life. After all, all of us live as citizens of one state or another, and our daily lives are intertwined with that of the state. Our happiness depends on not just how we live, but how we live *in a state*. Our inquiry must therefore be directed to first come up with answers to what is right and what is wrong in conduct and how one should

live harmoniously with others in a state. What can be more important than a measure of happiness in our lives? What we are made of does not seem to matter to such an inquiry.

We are individuals; but we are not isolated from each other; our virtues are tied to our actions not just towards oneself but towards others as well. It is all very nice to think what is being, or how we can come to know anything or what meaning is but if we have no clue regarding what is right or wrong about our actions one cannot be said to have made any progress in understanding ourselves and our relations to others around us. To say that ethics is first philosophy is not to say that it is foundational to other inquiry. It is not even to say that it is foundational to philosophy; it is simply to say that other inquiry, foundational or otherwise, is fine in its place but of no interest or of little interest to how we lead our lives, or what is right or wrong in conduct, and it is the latter which we need to figure out first *as philosophers*.

It is the moral dimension of human experience that cries out for attention and explanation and understanding. We are creatures with free will, driven by our sense of responsibility, to oneself, and to others, and how one is to generate a good life is of primary interest to us. We are capable of doing good and we are capable of doing evil. To know why one should be good, to oneself and others, is of greater significance than figuring out what is the nature of existence. No one is claiming that asking questions about the nature of existence or knowledge or meaning are irrelevant. No one is making any claims about their foundational status. It is a question of *significance to human life* that is at issue.

It would be pleasing to know that all things in the universe are merely a reflection of the Good, and hence our moral life is merely a reflection of this, but if this turned out to be not the case

that would not in any way change the seriousness of the question regarding what is significant regarding how we should live.⁶ Should we spend our lives thinking about whether space is continuous or discrete, or would it be better to figure out how to determine one's conduct? Is it not more sensible to wonder whether all things are allowed or whether there are bounds to our conduct and why that is so? How important can it be to know the nature of numbers when we do not even know how to live? These are rhetorical questions and a certain jousting regarding the significance of aspects of philosophical activity is involved in it. It is hard to state the norm that is guiding such thinking but one way to state it would be the following.

Norm Four: What is foundational is driven by what is significant to an understanding of what it is to lead a better life.

I have already stated above that here we are not using the word 'foundational' in a sense of claiming exclusive rights. Inquire into other aspects of the universe as much as you want, but one should be clear about where the greatest significance lies. Human curiosity is so powerful and has so many questions to pursue that one forgets what is most significant to our lives. We can be intensely curious about the height of Mt Everest or whether there is life on Mars. But the strength of forgetfulness is no argument for claiming foundational status for other forms of inquiry, philosophical or otherwise. Claiming foundational status for philosophy of language, for example, given this norm, would be to be indifferent and forgetful to the way we live. Norm Four tells us something: not all philosophically foundational inquiry is about the possibility of inquiry. It may not be about inquiry in general at all but an inquiry into specific aspects of conduct. One may force Norm Four into greater collaboration with the general tenor of the other

norms, but the sense of its being forced is clear. This is what sets Norm Four in tension with the other norms.

6. Foundations and A Distinction

We have now seen that even though the general idea behind foundations is towards a greater clarification of the 'nature' of inquiry or its objects, there can be different approaches to it and none of them can be taken to have a greater foundational status. As already stated, saying that *all* of them have foundational status is not to say anything new or informative. And it is not agreed at all that *philosophy* is necessarily about the nature and structure of inquiry; it may be—and some philosophers think, it *should* be—an inquiry into the sphere of human conduct and its ramifications.

The tension in the norms of foundations—amongst the first three, and also between the first three and the fourth norm—can be traced to a tension between two sorts of 'naturalist' tendencies in philosophy: a *naturalism of elements* and a *naturalism of the understanding*.

An excellent characterisation of a naturalism of the elements—or what some may describe as a *dream* version of the naturalism of the elements—is provided by Heraclitus: 'The world, the same for all, neither any god nor any man made; but it was always, and is and will be, fire ever living, kindling in measures and being extinguished in measures.'⁷

Explanations of phenomena lie within phenomena. And all phenomena trace back to the behaviour of some element, ultimately one element in Heraclitus's case. No extra wheels outside the universe are required to explain anything in the universe. Aspects of what Heraclitus says may not be essential parts of naturalism. The world need not be eternal as he maintains. Even the idea that the world should be

same for all is not necessarily a part of the naturalism of elements. It need not be same *in all respects* to everyone. What Heraclitus means by the phrase 'the world' appears to be restricted to physical phenomena. A naturalism of elements does not require that aesthetic sensibility or moral sensibility need to agree or need to come to an agreement.

A naturalism of elements simply states that the world as it appears to us—or at least part of the world that appears to us—bottoms out in a measured and hopefully humanly measurable way in the physical elements. This thought is well enshrined in modern science. Whether the thought is true and if true, whether we can realise it to be true is another issue.

A *naturalism of the understanding* takes the world to be the same for all, in a wider sense than Heraclitus apparently meant. A naturalism of the understanding can entertain abstract entities as part of the universe. Here, by naturalism, I do not mean a reductionist program straightaway. I mean an account of terms like right, wrong, just, unjust, beauty, ugliness in terms of a theory that explains our behaviour and our wider interaction with these terms as bearers of significance. Rawls's work on justice, or Sen's criticism of it, counts as a naturalism of the understanding for me. The physicalist dream of reducing all this talk to a physicalist base is just the standard naturalism of the elements.

Surely, science cannot be done without at least some mathematics. Thus, an account of the world must also account for the stick with which the measuring is done. And if that measuring stick is smeared with numbers and lines, then we have to ask what their ontological status is. And it does not stop there. We have to ask what, if any, ontological significance do our notions of right and wrong and beauty and ugliness and justice and injustice and lawfulness

and unlawfulness carry. A naturalism of the understanding seeks the 'objects' which answers to a wider curiosity of the world than just curiosity about its physical elements. It is not easy to collapse the naturalism of the understanding to the naturalism of the elements. And it is certainly not easy to climb from the naturalism of the elements to the naturalism of the understanding.

Leibniz was very optimistic when he wrote thus in *Monadology*: 'Souls act according to the laws of final causes through appetitions, ends and means. Bodies act as per the laws of efficient causes, or laws of motion. And the two kingdoms, that of efficient causes, and that of final causes are in harmony with each other.'⁸

That may well be if you accept the basic elements of the universe as monads, but not all philosophers agree on that. Leibniz collapses the naturalism of the elements to the naturalism of the understanding by changing the nature of the elements from dead matter to perceiving and desiring minds. Thus, Leibniz took perceiving and purposive behaviour as basic to the universe. If monads are fundamentally perceiving and desiring, and they are fundamental entities of the universe, then the naturalism of the elements and the naturalism of the understanding can well live with each other in harmony.

The way we do science, the way we live our life, the way we interact with others, throws up various concerns that a naturalism of the understanding wishes to address. These concerns may be thrown into one box and may be called 'normative concerns'. What Leibniz calls 'the laws of final causes' refers, at least, to the purposive behaviour of humans, of planning, of setting goals, and working towards them. This aspect of reality—in terms of the size of the

universe, a rather small one—needs to be accounted for in an account of the phenomena that we experience.

There are thus two tendencies that clash in philosophy. Those who take physics to be 'first philosophy' appear to think that naturalism of the elements is enough and that the naturalism of the understanding can be reduced to it. Those who see further, and realise that life has more elements in it than just the fundamental ones, those who are reflective enough to see the richness of human experience, both private and collective, tend to work on a theory that subsumes the naturalism of elements within the naturalism of the

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716)



understanding. Plato's *Theory of Forms* and Leibniz's *Monadology* are a good example of the naturalism of the understanding gathering prime attention. Just as the Good forms the cornerstone of the universe in Plato's *Republic*, for Leibniz, perception and appetitions in the Monad are the driving forces that explains every other aspect of the universe.

Of course, to our modern eyes and ears, Plato's or Leibniz's account is too optimistic, metaphysically loaded, and epistemologically weak to be sustained. But from our summary dismissal of such positions, it does not automatically follow that the naturalism of the elements is to be the clear winner. We need an account of the 'understanding'. We employ various concepts related to morality, aesthetics, politics, and science, and these concepts require a home and a place in the world.

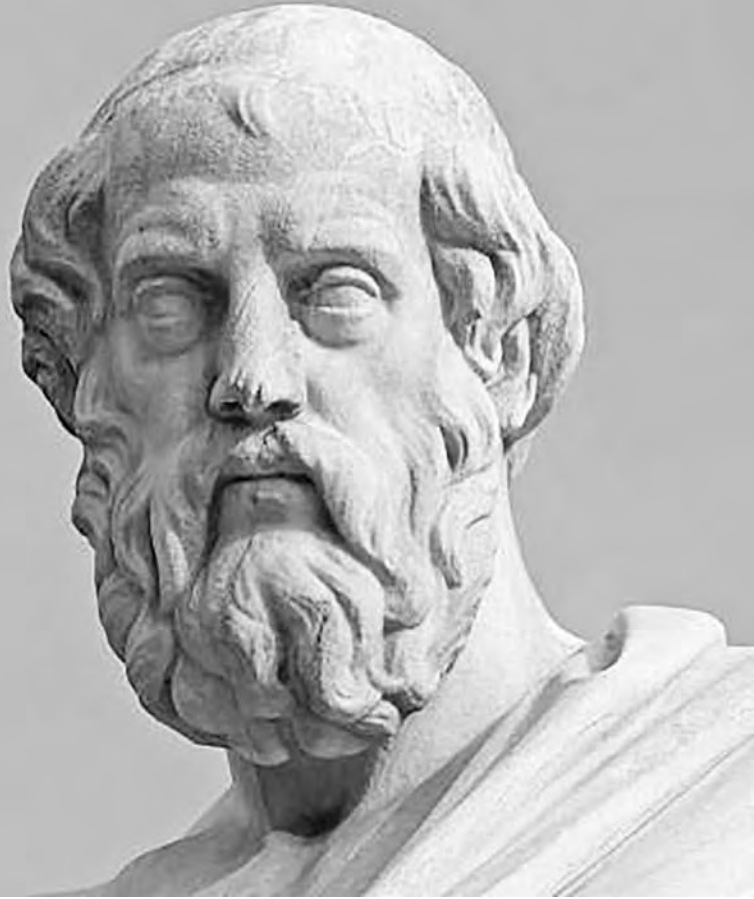
It should be noted that the idea of reducing the world of understanding that we inhabit to the physical elements is not *directly* any part of any of the norms of foundations of inquiry in history. There, the idea was to either say what is there—which also answers the question what it is to be at all—or how our minds connected with the world, either through the senses or through the devices of language. These have nothing much to do with the *physical* nature of the world. The world could have any nature and yet these projects would come up. All that these projects require is that there is a world of phenomena and that there is an inquiring mind that comprehends the phenomena. Moreover, one could not ask the question 'What is there?' if one already knew that science had decided what was there.

The reductionist question is, 'What *else* is there?' and how can what else that appears to be there be connected to what is there. It takes it as obvious that the question of what is there has already been answered by physics and the

job of the philosopher is to reduce the rest of the phenomena to 'physicalist talk'. It is an additional mopping-up job. What cannot be reduced can be thrown into the waiting hands of conventionalism, relativism, subjectivism, nominalism, or any of the other isms that keep nature to whatever physics says it is. It is essentially carving nature into what is natural and what is not, where natural means whatever is covered by the sciences. The idea is to show to what extent the world is the same for all, and then what explains the differences that we experience. One man's taste is different from another in food or in music. How do these differences come to exist? And do these differences imply a carving of nature or merely a matter of convention? For the physically minded reductionist, the world is the same for all in a small domain, that of physical entities of the smallest size.

Philosophers of a certain stripe may balk against such reductionism and try to save the phenomena differently. The idea will still be the same. It will be to show that the world is 'same for all' in a wider domain than physics. And the explanation for that sameness may not be easily reducible to just convention or some regimentation of relative opinions. The sameness might involve regarding more things to be there than the physicalist would allow. The physicalist does not answer the question 'What is there' in the Aristotelian sense. She or he answers the question 'What is everything built on' in the modern sense. The fact that everything is built of atoms need not suggest that atoms are a *this*, and are separable and a unity of sorts. Those need to be argued for.

All this is perfectly familiar territory from the history of the subject of philosophy. Protagoras is famously taken to be a relativist and Plato is taken to be opposed to his views. It is just that we didn't attend to the familiar territory because we



Plato

were looking at the norms of foundations from a different angle. We were looking at it from the angle of what were our objects of inquiry and how we accessed them. In such an enquiry the ‘objects’ of science would not have enjoyed any special status. That seemed quite foundational enough and the changes over the nature of foundations reflected a growing need to dig deeper into the instruments of inquiry that were used to further inquiry. There was a meta-norm that pushed metaphysics away because it was thought that laying foundations meant that we should not disturb what was revealed by further inquiry.

We can understand the familiar talk of reductionism and the responses to it by changing

the question that was being addressed before. Instead of asking the question ‘What is the foundation of inquiry’, we can ask the question ‘What aspects of the world are same for all and how did this sameness come about?’ This question could only arise because philosophers are aware that there are significant differences of opinion regarding how much of the world—or any of it—really is the same for all. If one accepts the story of science, that acceptance does not make it first philosophy in the sense of the notion of foundations earlier, but in a different sense, the sense where ‘first philosophy’ just means whatever story science has told us is the *same for all*. It is not relative to different cultures or perceivers.

What philosophers have to do is to figure out how much *else* apart from science is the same for all and for what reason. What norm is revealed by this kind of question? And if any norm is revealed by it, is it a norm of some foundational work? The norm revealed is a narrow one: take the methods of science as the best available and re-adjust all the other phenomena without disturbing the results of science. No doubt this kind of work can be exciting. One merely has to glance towards contemporary philosophy of mind. But it is not foundational work as traditionally conceived. Not because it does not agree with what we did in history, but because it takes a very large body of science for granted. Foundational work is where we lay out the nature and structure of the world and our methods of inquiry into it without taking anything for granted. Philosophy need not be independent of science, but it need not take science as basic so far as foundational work goes. That is the traditional way of looking at foundations, and the norms are not in tension with this way of regarding foundations.

The 'same for all' project need not be reductionist. One may take a leaf from the way the 'same for all' idea is utilised to argue that a critical aspect of philosophy is to figure out the *influence* of perspectives on truth. Truth is at least one goal of inquiry. So, one sort of foundational work that can be said to be clearly foundational—without any leanings towards science—is to see how perspectives that we bring to inquiry can affect the outcome of inquiry. Does the use of language, do the epistemic tools we use, do the metaphysical assumptions we have, colour the object that we are inquiring into? Is the colouring necessarily damaging to the nature of reality? What can we do to see reality as it is? What can we do to reduce the effect of perspective if any? But this work is, according to the norms that relate foundational work to inquiry,

foundational. Thus, the 'same for all' project can be foundational if we do not take science as first philosophy. Science is an inquiry into nature; philosophy relates to an inquiry into the objects, vehicle, and methods of inquiry. So, philosophy creates the possibility of inquiry. And the task of philosophy is on the 'same for all' picture, a fight against relativism in major domains like right and wrong, justice and injustice.

This is pretty much the traditional picture. The history of the subject and its current state teach us that there are various ways to inquire into the nature of inquiry: we can inquire into the possible objects of inquiry; we can inquire into the methods of inquiry; we can inquire into the language of inquiry; we can fight relativism. Fighting relativism is still the weakest of these as a foundational activity, for to fight it you have to have some idea about what it is that you are defending against relativism. A realist naturalism of the understanding rears its head easily as a victim that needs to be saved from relativism.

What have we really got from this discussion? The history of philosophy shows us that the notion of foundations has changed. But what did not change is the focus. Somehow, philosophical activity must relate to inquiry. Just like the literary critic may write great criticism and yet not produce a novel through it, the philosopher works hard to clear up the space for inquiry without occupying that space. Our sense of foundations is flouted if we take something as basic—like physics—on which we strive to build. Philosophers do not need to stand on someone else's achievements, just because it has none of its own to stand on. It keeps inquiring into what makes physics an inquiry into the nature of the world and what methods and language do physicists use to do so.

How does all this relate to the distinction between a *naturalism of the elements* and the

naturalism of the understanding? If we take foundations to be had only when we know what objects are there in the world, then should one assume a physicalist standpoint or not? Not unless one is a naturalist about elements. But that is to assume a base without a philosophical inquiry into the nature of the entities, apart from the fact that one is just assuming that all else can be reduced to the base. This tends to violate a traditional norm: a philosophical foundation lays a basis for further inquiry but it does not start off from already assuming that some other inquiry has succeeded. It has nothing against other kinds of inquiry and their success. It does not take those successes as having laid a base. A complete account of the world is needed, and elements that engage our understanding are beyond the elements that just make up the material world.

Metaphysics tends to live half its life amongst the elements and the other half amongst the creatures of the understanding, the final causes, so to speak. But epistemology and philosophy of language tend to spend a lot more time within the world of understanding and reason. Making the mind reach out and touch the world is an effort within the realm of understanding and is traditionally considered as foundational work. To lay a foundation is to make a world available. Do we have to decide what the world contains for us to know that we have a world available to us in its fullness? This question need not make us think that there is a tension between different norms. There is, but it may be resolvable, possibly through the meta-norm that foundations disturb nothing upstairs. This would make metaphysics less foundational and give more credence to epistemology *or* philosophy of language as more foundational. But whether the meta-norm is right or not is a key question that I leave unanswered.

7. Foundations and Disagreement

One argument that would suggest that philosophy simply could not be a foundational activity is the endemic disagreement between philosophers. This was mentioned before. How can anything claim to be foundational if no two philosophers agree on anything? Is it not better to take science as first philosophy and carry on with philosophical inquiry after that?

Disagreement is a serious worry. I agree. However, whatever sense the notion of a foundation has, it has it independent of any disagreements that may arise. This may be suggested from the fact that philosophers themselves have not lost the sense of carrying out foundational work even though they are well aware of the disagreements within the subject. This means that the sense of the work being foundational stems from a source different from and stronger than the defeasible force that disagreement may carry. Kant was appalled by the wars of metaphysicians but he still found a way to do philosophy. Surely, he knew others would disagree with him. That did not deter him from studying and writing philosophy. Also, the disagreements in philosophy are often informative and based on serious arguments revealing fallacies and logical problems in the positions of other philosophers. This suggests that some truth is being tracked, elusive as it may be. What the nature of that truth is will be the answer to the question: what do we mean by working at foundations?

8. Conclusion

Our situation has not improved much, for we had ended the historical section with the idea that to say that if every activity of philosophers is foundational then that is no advance over the common idea of philosophy as a foundational activity. And we arrived at this position because we had three norms of what it is to be

foundational and some meta-norms to go with them and the real work lay in figuring out which of these norms and meta-norms really stand as the correct guide to what is to count as foundational work. We want one candidate to do the job of foundation-laying, but it is not clear which one it is. If we have a clear candidate, we would have the norm regarding foundations in our hands and possibly some meta-norms would come attached with it.

The only 'advance' we made was a tiny one: philosophers cannot take others' work as foundational for that would not make philosophy a foundational activity itself. This followed from the fact that the naturalism of the elements cannot just be accepted without accommodating and acknowledging the naturalism of the understanding. Philosophy comes first. There is some sense to the notion of *first* philosophy. Laying a foundation is not about what is the 'same for all' and what is not. We can arrive at an expansive picture of what is the same for all, an all embracing realism of sorts, without having laid any satisfactory basis for such a realism. The expansive picture needs a theory, something like *Monadology*, but more believable.

It will be said that foundational work involves looking into the nature and the possibility of inquiry. That is what makes it foundational. It is an extremely general kind of inquiry. But it is a brute intuition that this is foundational. If generality were a guide, then meta-philosophy, which studies philosophy, should be even more foundational, as it inquires into how inquiry can take place into the nature and possibility of inquiry. But no one thinks that meta-philosophy is more foundational or fundamental than philosophy. By the same argument, philosophy should not be taken to be more foundational than what it inquires into. So, the argument from generality

cuts both ways and cannot be taken to be a deciding factor in wondering what is more foundational or not.

The one promising meta-norm that seems to have guided foundational work is that foundations should leave everything as it is. All that we know should be restored or remain unaffected, once the foundations are laid. But this meta-norm can be interpreted strongly to mean that philosophy is a practical activity and not a knowledge-producing activity, a thought close to Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. To make the norm weaker, we can say that philosophical work leaves not everything unaffected but everything *else* apart from what we have come to know from philosophy unaffected. The worry in weakening the norm like this is to let a number of candidates rear their heads as foundational work. Once the weaker version, the meta-norm is not discerning enough. What we need is another norm, something that governs this meta-norm but allows us to discriminate. We need a weaker form of the meta-norm that allows the least possible disturbance and yet remains cognitive. Whether such a balance can be struck has to be seen.



Notes and References

5. See Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).
6. Of course, this is a contentious statement in itself. Some philosophers, like Plato, would think that a particular symmetry must exist in our drive for the good and the nature of the universe. They cannot just exist independently of each other. The thought is both powerful and appealing.
7. Jonathan Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1987), 59.
8. L Strickland, *Leibniz's Monadology: A New Translation and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2014), 144.

YOUNG EYES

Protecting the Environment

THE PROBLEM of the environment is an alarming one with great consequences not to those who created them, but to us, the young, who had a negligible role in creating the problem. This is the inheritance that the adults are leaving for us. We have to inherit earth and environment that is polluted, toxic and has scarcities of natural resources like water and oil. The worst aspect of this problem is that we children are not taught much about the environment and Nature and how to protect or conserve it. Though the situation in schools is changing, parents seldom spend time teaching us these things. On the other hand, they inculcate in us numerous traits that damage the environment.

We children think that adults should wake up and understand that not only are they giving us damaged earth in inheritance, but they also do not seem concerned about teaching us how to fix these problems or at least how to ensure that they do not assume huge proportions. This they can do by teaching us values that respect the holistic nature of the universe. We should be taught that each of our actions has some effect on the environment. We have to become the servants of Mother Nature. We should respect her and not violate her in any manner.

The first step in the direction of the protection of the environment or its conservation is to minimise our needs. A simple life does not exploit Nature more than necessary. Hoarding of resources is only a sign of a severe form of greed and snatches away from the share of natural resources available to other living beings. The choices we make every moment of our daily lives

determine the extent of harm caused to Nature. Every time we resort to using something that uses natural resources like water, oil, or something that is produced from these natural resources like electricity, we draw upon the limited wealth of the environment. Every time we decide to use a car, scooter, or a motorcycle, we deplete the natural resources of Mother Earth a bit more. Each time you decide to take a printout of a file, you deplete the resources of Nature a bit more. Each time you decide to use the air conditioner, you take from the share of the natural resources available to all living beings.

Hence, it is very important that we be judicious in our use of resources and also take positive steps in conserving or protecting our environment. It is important because there would soon be a time when it would be too late, rather it is already too late. It is a time of not being able to go back, a turning point when we would have no way to bring in any remedy.

Is it difficult to conserve the environment? No, it is quite easy. All one has to use is the brain. One has to use common sense, logic, and thinking. One has to be also using one's heart. One has to be considerate towards Mother Earth, towards other living beings. We need to be alert and careful about the amount of energy we use for our daily activities. There should be a detailed recording of the amount of energy spent in every small way. Periodically, this should be checked and also audited by external authorities.

There are small ways in which the energy used and also the kind of energy used can be changed in a way that Nature is only disturbed

to the most minimum. For example, we can use solar energy for almost everything now. Even air conditioners work on solar energy today. We can plant the maximum number of trees, plants, and other greenery near our homes, offices, and also inside buildings. They not only add to the beauty of a place, but they ensure that the levels of pollution are reduced drastically and also that the future generations get a less damaged natural environment.

Every building should be given a minimum green standard to follow. If a building does not follow this requirement, it should not be approved by the local authorities. For example, rainwater harvesting should be made compulsory for all buildings, irrespective of whether a locality has any water crisis or not. In all efforts to conserve or protect energy, it is quite important that we focus on reducing or eliminating the wastage of any kind of energy. Energy should not be wasted. Food and water are only different forms of energy and they should not be wasted. Some countries have already started penalising people for wasting food. This should be done by all countries. Restaurants and other eateries should charge for any wastage of food.



An important part of teaching about the conservation of natural resources to people, including children, is to make it clear to all what is happening. For example, all the water pipes should be properly labelled showing what kind of water is going where. Pipes of drinking water, water for washing and cleaning, water for plants, and other purposes, should all be clearly labelled.

While conserving the environment, we can take the help of other living beings also. For example, fishes are good at keeping water bodies clean. We can have small sanctuaries for birds. This will make a place scenic and the ecosystem is also developed. It would also help if we have many flower plants. Such plants attract many wonderful creatures.

It is a good idea to use technology to conserve natural resources. For example, using motion sensors, we can regulate electric lights and other appliances so that they are turned off once people move away or are not using them for some time. Also, we could use natural light and air more and more, so that we minimise the use of lights and electric appliances like the air conditioner and fans.

It is urgent, very urgent to conserve and protect the environment and the only time we have is now. We have to just put in a little thought and a little effort to do it. We can create a better world for us and for those who would come after us by being a bit cautious and diligent. For example, it might seem difficult to give up the use of plastic or polyethene bags, but with practice, it becomes very easy to do; it becomes our habit. Such habits also make the lives of other people easy, comfortable, and less damaging to Nature. Teaching and learning about environment conservation give everyone a great sense of responsibility. We have to turn from aggression to conservation by conserving the environment. We have to open our clenched fists and extend our hands to the environment.



BALABODHA

Ancient Wisdom Made Easy

Ahimsa

THE WORD 'AHIMSA' is a commonly used Sanskrit word. It is used by people, who do not even know Sanskrit, as it is present in almost every Indian language. The widely used meaning of the word 'ahimsa' is non-violence. However, it is necessary to see the other meanings and the origins of this Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word 'ahimsa' is derived by adding the *a* prefix and *ah* suffix to the root verb *himsa*, which means injury, mischief, hurt, harm, slaughter, killing, slaying, robbery, wrong, destruction, plunder, magic used to effect the ruin or injury of an enemy, wife of Adharma, daughter of Lobha and Nishkriti, and the plant Kokilaksha or Gokulakanta or *hygrophilia auriculata*. The word 'ahimsa' means non-injury, no mischief, no hurt, no harm, no slaughter, no killing, no slaying, no robbery, not committing any wrong, not destroying, and not plundering.

Ahimsa or non-violence is not just abstaining from physical violence but not harbouring any ill against anyone. This comes when one understands that every living being is just an extension of oneself, that every living being is an expression of the one divinity. With this knowledge of oneness, a person automatically becomes non-violent.

Many religious traditions including Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism emphasise the importance of practising ahimsa. Mahatma Gandhi and many social reformers have applied the principles of ahimsa to the field of politics to protest or show general non-cooperation in

a peaceful manner that led to Gandhi's famous movement called Satyagraha, a movement of passive political resistance. Ahimsa is considered to be one of the requisite qualities for a spiritual aspirant.

The Jain symbol of a hand with a wheel on the palm having the word 'ahimsa' written in the centre symbolises the Jain vow of ahimsa. The word 'ahimsa' is found in the oldest extant scripture, the Rig Veda. However, ahimsa does not mean that one has to silently suffer violence. A person following ahimsa can and should protect oneself from violence. Also, in many religious traditions, the killing of animals has been condoned for food and the performance of scriptural injunctions.

In the context of non-violence or ahimsa, the intent is important with the physical act itself. The intent of doing violence is the cause of all evil and has to be avoided and ahimsa is one of the five methods of *yama*, self-restraint, according to Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*. Ahimsa is also presented as the ultimate dharma: '*Ahimsa paramo dharmah*.' Many religious traditions advocate the non-killing of animals, even for food. In some traditions, non-killing of animals is observed on special occasions or during festive periods. The practice of non-violence does not mean that a person should be physically or psychologically weak.

A holistic approach to Nature and religion makes Indian religious traditions more accepting of all the forms of living beings. The principle of non-violence, ahimsa, has also evolved around the idea of the universal divinity and that is why no living being is considered violent according to Sanatana Dharma.

PB

TRADITIONAL TALES

The Faith that Brought a Miracle

(Continued from the previous issue)

MAUJI: Sir! Please see closely the Lord who is tied to the tree. Please tell me if this is the same Lord you saw.

The Lord was not visible to the brahmana, who could only see a rope tied to the tree. However, Mauji was repeatedly asking the brahmana to check whether it was the same Lord that the brahmana had seen. The brahmana looked around. He rubbed his eyes and looked again. He could not see the Lord; he could only see the rope tied to the tree. Hence, he asked Mauji: 'Where is the Lord?'

Mauji: What is this sir? If you cannot see a cow in daylight, how can you spot a buffalo in a new moon night? Look here at the Lord who has been tightly tied to the tree. Identify him to be the Lord and go your way.

The brahmana was all the time worried that his cloth-bag would be stolen. So, he was intent on escaping from Mauji and said: 'Yes, yes. I was absentminded earlier and did not properly notice the Lord. This is the Lord I was talking about! It is the same Lord whom you have tied with ropes to the tree.' The brahmana told this despite not seeing the Lord.

Mauji did not know that the brahmana was lying and he was satisfied with what the brahmana said. Mauji thanked him and lovingly bade him farewell. The brahmana continued his journey thinking that he had escaped from a grave peril.

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After the brahmana left, Mauji untied the ropes with which the Lord was tied to the tree. He

prostrated at the Lord's feet with devotion.

Lord: My child Mauji! I appeared before you because of the complete faith that you have in me. That brahmana does not have complete faith in me like you have. He is not a devotee.

Mauji: Are you saying that he is not your devotee? If that is so, why did you give him your vision? He said that he had your vision in his meditation.

Lord: I have never given that brahmana any vision. He has never seen me in his meditation.

Mauji: What are you saying? Was he lying when he said that he saw you daily in his meditation? Just now before my eyes, he saw you tied to the tree and said that you are the Lord. Would you say that it was also a lie?

Lord: Yes, all that he said about him seeing me are lies. He has never seen me. Yet, he told you that he had seen me in his meditation. Even now, when you brought him here, I was visible only to you; I was not at all visible to him. That being the truth, he lied that he saw me tied to the tree. He is a great fraud.

Mauji: Let bygones be bygones. I got your vision only because I met that brahmana. I believed whatever he said to be completely true. Even though you say that he is a fraud, I consider him to be my guru.

Lord: My child, Mauji! Ask whatever you want. I never turn away empty-handed those who get my vision. Child, ask whatever you want.

Mauji: My Lord! My God! You should give me your vision whenever I sit with closed eyes and hold onto my nose, after finishing my bath.

Lord: Let that be so, my child. You will get my vision always as you wish.

Mauji: My Lord! If you permit me, I wish to ask of you one more boon.

Lord: Ask. I will give you whatever you want.

Mauji: O, supreme Lord! Even though you call him a fraud, that brahmana has now become my guru. Whenever that elderly person bathes and sits and hold his nose, you should give him your vision. This is my prayer.

Lord: My child, you have a great heart. Generally, it is the guru who rescues the disciple from the ocean of samsara. You, on the other hand, have ensured moksha for your guru through your prayer. Even though he is a cheat, I will give him my vision, because you have asked. After getting my vision, he too will attain a high state of knowledge.

7

A year passed after this. One day, as usual, Mauji was sitting by the bank of the river grazing his cows. Then he saw his guru, the brahmana, at a distance, coming towards him. Immediately, Mauji ran towards the brahmana and said: 'Revered guru! Please accept my salutations.'

Brahmana: My guru, please accept my salutations. My guru, please accept my salutations.

Mauji: It is because of you that I got the Lord's vision.

Brahmana: No, no. It is because of you that I got the Lord's vision.

Mauji: I am just a cowherd. You, on the other hand, are an intelligent brahmana scholar.

Brahmana: No, no. I am a cowherd. You are the intelligent brahmana scholar.

Mauji: I am a fool. It is by your grace that I learnt how to live in the world.

Brahmana: I am a fraud. I do not believe in the Lord. It is because of your grace that I got true faith in the Lord and devotion to the Lord.



Mauji: Whatever happened in the past, let it pass. You have now become both guru and disciple to me. I too have become guru and disciple to you.

Brahmana: Please do one thing. Please give up the work of a cowherd. I too will give up being a fake brahmana scholar. Then we will go from village to village and sing the Lord's glories. By doing so, we will dwell in true devotion. We will make the worldly also dwell in true devotion.

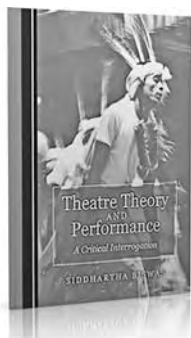
Mauji and the brahmana took to a mendicant life from then. The brahmana named himself 'the cowherd's disciple' and Mauji named himself 'the pandit's disciple'.

8

Both moved from village to village. The cowherd's disciple sang devotional songs clapping his hands. With him the pandit's disciple also sang keeping tune on the tambura. It is surely unnecessary to explain to the readers that it was these two great men that we met in the beginning of this story.

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



**Theatre Theory and
Performance:
A Critical Interrogation**
Siddhartha Biswas

Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Lady
Stephenson Library, Welbeck Road,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 2PA, UK.
Website: <https://www.cambridgescholars.com>. 2017. 115 pp. £58.99. HB. ISBN
9781443895729.

The book under review offers an original analysis of theatre in Bengal and other hyper-local theatres throughout the world. Siddhartha Biswas, in this non-obscurantist book, explains the role of Utpal Dutt in contemporary Bengali theatre through a scrutiny of the Bengali middle-class. It is interesting to note that Biswas, in his chapter, 'Theatre and Politics' (25–42), does not once take to philosophical rants, which are the norm today in academia, but through close readings of literary archives offline and online, contributes meaningfully to the philosophy of performance.

'Theatre and Politics' is a tour de force in revisionary Marxist analysis of Utpal Dutt's theatre and ideology without giving away the fact that Biswas is refashioning the vast, extant scholarship in English and Bengali on Dutt. It is within this established canon of dramaturgy that Biswas enacts his cultural qua philosophical work:

Utpal Dutt's theatre was much more nation-centric than that of [Bertolt] Brecht's. The latter's plays focused on class and ideology while Dutt looked at class with a very specific geopolitical agenda. As his relationship with the Communist Party of India shows, he was more focused on the state of the masses than on any 'universal' (at least deemed so) ideology that was projected as the answer. He believed in [Konstantin] Stanislavsky and his theatre became this fusion of

the epic, the naturalistic and the mythical traditions. The other departure from Brecht was in the construction of the protagonist. While the Epic [theatre] did not believe in heroes, Dutt was looking for central figures that epitomize the idea and spearhead the action. ... The urban middle-class Bengali has very rarely been good in actual action. This is a major problem even on the stage itself. The actors and directors have imported characters and stories or such inspiration from all over the world, but whatever the costume might be, very rarely has the production been able to transcend the local cultural flavour. This has not been limited to the inadequate costumes or make-up, but to the entire factor of representation. In the case of adaptations, the values and ideations have been brought nearer to the regional, and much has been lost in the process (38).

Therefore, Biswas rightly concludes that Dutt started searching for newer forms of protest which would prod Dutt's audience to seek what the ancient Greeks termed Cosmopolitanism; which is now all the more needed in a world polarised by alt-right forces. Dutt himself wanted theatre to 'constitute a perpetual reminder ... for those whose growing absorption in the narrowing business of life tends to make them forget [the revolutionary role of theatre] ... and take [it] merely as a hypocritical satisfaction of their aesthetic conscience' (Utpal Dutt, 'Shakespeare and the Modern Stage', *Epic Theatre: Subarnajayanti Sankalan Vol. 1*, ed. Arup Mukhopadhyay (Kolkata: Deep, 1988), 283–90 quoted in Naina Dey, 'Utpal Dutt and *Macbeth* Translated', *Performing Shakespeare in India: Exploring Indianness, Literatures and Cultures*, eds Shormishtha Panja and Babli Moitra Saraf (New Delhi: Sage, 2016), 191–203).

The hyper-local nature of theatre production and performance, analysed by Biswas, is a rebuttal to the venture-capitalists', multinationals',

industrial demands of what Guy Standing terms rightly as demands of a 'precariat economy' (See Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011)). It is within these discourses of inequitable distribution of power and capital-resources that Biswas's analysis of Indian theatre as 'activist theatre movements' (42) should be contextualised. The book under review is a supplement, as it were, to Arundhati Roy's non-fiction corpus, now collected and published together as *My Seditious Heart* (See Arundhati Roy, *My Seditious Heart* (New York: Penguin Hamish Hamilton, 2019)).

It is not merely that Utpal Dutt or Safdar Hashmi are activists whom Biswas quotes at length in the chapter 'Theatre and Politics', but it is Biswas himself who comes out as a disrupting academic force in a very Antonio Gramsci-Walter Benjamin like manner. Biswas's stress on non-hegemonic open-ended qualia puts him squarely in the ideologic lineage of those whom he so passionately comments on in this chapter and throughout the book. The magic of Biswas's literary sleuthing is that without him spewing jargon, he becomes a philosopher of literature or theatre as much as Ania Loomba alone now, is a philosopher of literature.

Biswas's philosophical roots do not derive from Francophone philosophers but are to be found in the references in Loomba's recently published *Revolutionary Desires* (See Ania Loomba, *Revolutionary Desires: Women, Communism and Feminism in India* (London: Routledge, 2018)). Biswas's debt to the communist women and men referred to by Loomba is beyond the scope of this review but needs to be worked out in detail in the future. In a very Dutt- and Hashmi-like sense, this chapter is a protest against the status quo of our zeitgeist. When a literary critic takes the job of literary analyses seriously, then alone that critic becomes a philosopher and a political agent of positive systematic change. This is not to say that Biswas is a mere philosopher; his insights are always tempered by someone who knows the inner-workings of literature or theatre.

In the very next chapter, 'Performance and Performers' (43–50), Biswas writes of the actual problematics of acting. He begins with

the innocuous statement that in '*A Midsummer Night's Dream* Bottom lays out many rules of performance' (43) and then taking us through Greek (44) and Elizabethan issues of performativity (45), Biswas concludes that:

Technical issues can be replicated, but acting cannot be. The performative aspect of day to day living also problematizes the issue further. Everything we do can be categorized as performance. However, theatrical performance is bound by the norms of theatricality and artificiality. It takes place at a designated place and at a designated time. So, unless there is a conscious manipulation of the space—temporarily blurring the boundary between the audience and the performers—the theatrical space/time is understood to be separate from the real. The presence of the audience is a very significant part of the performance. ... In all these [live streaming shows] the performance is live and the audience actively engaged, and in most of these the performance is premeditated if not rehearsed. So, in a way, the boundary between a play being acted and such a programme being presented may not seem so different, even on an aesthetic scale. This, in fact, emphatically proves the artificiality and dishonesty our civilization is practicing more and more (48–9).

Biswas's insistence on not conflating simulations for the real gives a numinous quality to his exegetical sweep on contemporary theatre leading to the chapter on Indian poetics, 'The *Bhava-Rasa* Theory' (65–73).

This chapter is one of the most accessible chapters on Indian dramaturgy available to the Western world today. Unlike Sheldon Pollock, who robs the idea of the holy from his readings of *Rasa* in his *Rasa Reader* (See *A Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. Sheldon Pollock (New York: Columbia University, 2016)); Biswas, who professes Marxism, sees the archaeology of Hindu *bhava-rasa* theory and theatre correctly; as being definitively transcendental. Biswas writes that both Western and Eastern theatres 'share the same design—preservation of social hierarchy and harmony. The Western theory [of dramaturgy] speaks of pity and fear, the Eastern [theory] overlooks the entire overt political construct

and focuses on a different human-divine association. The latter does not even allow the focus to fall on any discord or protest that might go against the structure and constructs a completely stylized theory of representation dealing more in terms of the “spiritual” (71). The difference between Pollock’s much-acclaimed learning and Biswas’s comparatively unknown book is that Biswas has the inner mettle to write: ‘Perhaps one may just respectfully comment that all early high-brow art forms were aimed at a limited audience’ (73).

First Biswas mentions, albeit sceptically, the ‘spiritual’, and then fairly assesses Western art as being as high brow as Eastern art. This assertion of Biswas’s can be contested, but unlike Pollock, he does not pose to be a lover of all things Eastern, while secretly degrading Indian theatre of its inherent spirituality. To illustrate through a Western lens; this reviewer may choose to see the *Book of Job* as a testament to Yahweh’s cruelty in toying in a Zeus-like fashion with Job, or, this reviewer might choose to read that ‘Wisdom’ book as high art, which shows the Majesty of Yahweh within Covenant Love. One may not agree in the reality of hesed, but accepting Biswas’s aforementioned respectful humility, one may sincerely try to enter the world of Biblical wisdom literature. Pollock shows no such humility anywhere.

Biswas’s book is a manifesto for protest and revolution in a world that is searching for reductionist neo-Kantian verities, being ruled by zealous of various colours.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

Assistant Professor of English
Narasinha Dutt College, Howrah



***Human Kindness and the
Smell of Warm Croissants:
An Introduction to Ethics***

Ruwen Ogien

Translated by Martin Thom

Columbia University Press, 61 West
62 Street, New York, NY 10023, USA.
Website: <https://www.cup.columbia.edu>. 2015. 256 pp. \$30. PB. ISBN
9780231169233.

Ruwen Ogien pleasantly reminds us the pleasures of doing philosophy through this extremely lucid and accessible primer on ethics. Presenting nineteen moral puzzles and seven chapters on moral intuitions, Ogien shows the readers that philosophy is not the distant and dry discipline far from life that it is made out to be. Philosophy has to do with the daily junctures of thinking and difficult decision-making. It is ingrained in every aspect of human endeavour and understanding.

There are different schools of philosophy and there is the general attitude of philosophy; Ogien concentrates on the latter and helps the reader to develop one’s own standpoint rather than quoting some thinker. He refers to psychology research to support his arguments apart from citing philosophers from Immanuel Kant to John Rawls. Ogien brings a fresh perspective to the problems of philosophy by including experiments on human behaviour with a critical angle. He emphasises the importance of thought experiments notwithstanding the objection that they are far removed from reality.

As in most textbooks of philosophy, Ogien does the classical error of focussing only on Eurocentric, Anglophile thought, not dwelling on parallels outside the Western academia. Indian philosophers have shown why ethics without foundations stands on a shaky ground. If ethics is dependent only on the principle that one should not do to others what one would not have others do to oneself, a life of selfish engrossment in pleasures will be quite ethical.

Thought experiments that Ogien acclaims and expounds were the common staple of Indian thinkers when they posited the *purva-paksha*, the opponent, in their arguments establishing their school of thought. Excluding such patterns only encourages polarising forces that are supremacist and racist, fundamentalism and the alt-right.

Ogien has created a delight for those interested in the intricacies of human thought, especially for those who want to get a hold on doing philosophy.

Swami Narasimhananda
Editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*

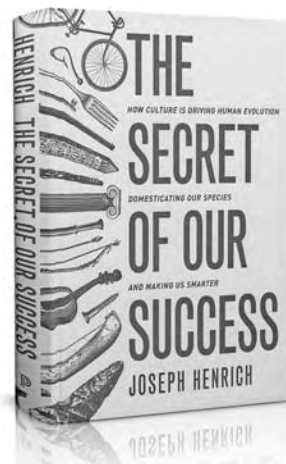
MANANA

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***The Secret of Our Success:
How Culture is Driving Human Evolution
Domesticating Our Species and
Making Us Smarter***

Joseph Henrich

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. 2016. xviii + 445 pp. \$29.95. HB. ISBN 9780691166858.



WE HUMANS ARE not like other animals. Sure, we are obviously similar to monkeys and other apes in many ways, but we also variously play chess, read books, build missiles, enjoy spicy dishes, donate blood, cook food, obey taboos, pray to gods, and make fun of people who dress or speak differently. And though all societies make fancy technologies, follow rules, cooperate on large scales, and communicate in complex languages, different societies do all this in very different ways and to significantly different degrees. How could evolution have produced such a creature, and how does answering this question help us understand human psychology and behavior? How can we explain both cultural diversity and human nature?

My journey to addressing these questions, and writing this book, began in 1993 when I quit my engineering position at Martin Marietta, near Washington DC, and drove to California, where I enrolled as a graduate student in UCLA's Department of Anthropology. I had two interests at the time, which I'd developed while pursuing undergraduate degrees in both anthropology and aerospace engineering at the University of Notre Dame. One interest focused on understanding economic behavior and decision-making in the developing world, with the idea that new insights

might help improve people's lives around the globe. In part, I was attracted to anthropology because the research involved in-depth and long-term fieldwork, which I felt had to be crucial to understanding people's decisions and behavior, and the challenges they faced. This was my 'applied' focus. Intellectually, I was also keenly interested in the evolution of human societies, particularly in the basic question of how humans went from living in relatively small-scale societies to complex nation-states over the last ten millennia. The plan was to study with two well-known anthropologists, one a sociocultural anthropologist and ethnographer named Allen Johnson, and the other an archaeologist named Tim Earle.

After a summer of research in Peru, traveling by dugout canoe among indigenous Matsigenka communities in Amazonia, I wrote my master's thesis on the effects of market integration on farming decisions and deforestation. Things were going fine, my advisors were happy (though Tim had departed for another university), and my thesis was accepted. Nevertheless, I was dissatisfied with what anthropology had to offer for explaining why the Matsigenka were doing what they were doing. For starters, why were Matsigenka communities so different from the nearby indigenous Piro communities, and why

did they seem to have subtly adaptive practices that they themselves couldn't explain?

I considered bailing out of anthropology at this point and heading back to my old engineering job, which I had quite liked. However, during the previous few years I'd gotten excited about human evolution. I had also enjoyed studying human evolution at Notre Dame, but I hadn't seen how it could help me with explaining either economic decision-making or the evolution of complex societies, so I'd thought of it more as a hobby. At the beginning of graduate school, to narrowly focus my energies on my main interests, I tried to get out of taking the required graduate course on human evolution. To do this, I had to appeal to the instructor of the graduate course in biological anthropology, Robert Boyd, and argue to him that my undergraduate work met the course requirements. I'd already successfully done this for the required socio-cultural course. Rob was very friendly, looked carefully over the classes I had taken, and then denied the request. If Rob hadn't denied my request, I suspect I'd be back doing engineering right now.

It turned out that the field of human evolution and biological anthropology was full of ideas one could use to explain important aspects of human behavior and decision-making. Moreover, I learned that Rob and his long-time collaborator, the ecologist Pete Richerson, had been working on ways to model culture using mathematical tools from population genetics. Their approach also allowed one to think systematically about how natural selection might have shaped human learning abilities and psychology. I didn't know any population genetics, but because I knew about state variables, differential equations, and stable equilibria (I was an aerospace engineer), I could more or less read and understand their papers. By the end of my first year, working on a side project under Rob's guidance, I'd written

a MATLAB program to study the evolution of conformist transmission.

Entering my third year, with a master's under my belt, I decided to go back to the drawing board—to start over, in a sense. I consciously took a 'reading year', though I knew it would extend my time to the PhD by one year. You could probably get away with this only in a department of anthropology. I had no classes to take, no advisors to work for, and no one really seemed to care what I was doing. I started by going to the library to take out a stack of books. I read books on cognitive psychology, decision-making, experimental economics, biology, and evolutionary psychology. Then I moved to journal articles. I read every article ever written on an economics experiment called the Ultimatum Game, which I'd used during my second and third summers with the Matsigenka. I also read a lot by the psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky as well as by a political scientist named Elinor Ostrom. Kahneman and Ostrom would, years later, both receive Nobel Prizes in economics. Of course, along the way, I never stopped reading anthropological ethnographies (this was my 'fun' reading). In many ways, that year was the first year of research on this book, and by the end of it, I had developed a murky vision for what I wanted to do. The goal was to integrate insights from across the social and biological sciences to build an evolutionary approach to studying human psychology and behaviour that takes seriously the cultural nature of our species. We needed to harness the full arsenal of available methods, including experiments, interviews, systematic observation, historical data, physiological measures, and rich ethnography. We had to study people, not in university laboratories, but in their communities and over their life course (from babies to the elderly). ☞

REPORTS



Silver Jubilee of Veda Vidyalaya



Programmes at Guwahati

Commemoration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Addresses at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA

Ramakrishna Mission, Guwahati organised a devotees convention, held a book release function and conducted a welfare activity on 29, 30 June, and 1 July 2019; On 29 June 2019: The ashrama organised a devotees' convention, which was attended by 167 devotees. Srimat Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, gave his benedictory address; Swami Tadbodhananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Dibrugarh, and Swami Chandrakantananda presented their speeches respectively on the relevance of Swamiji's Chicago Addresses and the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda in the context of the modern society. Devotional Songs were performed by Swami Divyalokananda; On 30 June 2019, Srimat Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj released the book *Adhyatma Ramayana* published by the ashrama in the Assamese language translated by Sri Manmath Deka, retired civil engineer, PHE Department, Government of Assam and Vice-President of the ashrama's managing committee; On 1 July 2019, ashrama conducted Unit and Health Awareness Camp for pregnant women and community members, at Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Borgaon, Nellie. Srimat Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj distributed school bags among the GAP (Gadadhar Abhyudaya Prakalpa) children. Also, sewing machines were distributed among the trained poor women as a part of welfare activities.

Ramakrishna Mission, Silchar organised a values orientation camp in commemoration of the 125th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's

Chicago Addresses. The camp was organised in 10 different places of Cachar district. Around 5,000 students and 100 teachers from 30 schools and colleges attended.

News of Branch Centres

On 27 June, Swami Suvirananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, laid the foundation stone for the proposed boys' high school building at **Ramakrishna Mission, Shivanahalli** centre and also inaugurated the new computer section at the centre's school.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Taki held parents' counselling programmes at two places in North 24 Parganas district on 29 June in which a total of 150 parents participated.

Ramakrishna Math, Ramanathapuram distributed 12 sewing machines to students who have completed 4 months tailoring course. The centre has given full scholarship for 5 poor and meritorious students studying diploma in nursing.

Vivekananda Veda Vidyalaya, Belur Math celebrated its silver jubilee on 30 June 2019 and 1 July 2019. On 30 June 2019, Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the function. The components of the programme were vedic chanting, welcome address by Swami Balabhadrananda, Assistant General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; reminiscences of the Vidyalaya; Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj and Swami Suvirananda addressed the audience; On 1 July 2019, the Veda Vidyalaya students presented a cultural programme at Vivekananda Sabhagriha, Saradapitha. The components of the programme were Vedic chanting, Sanskrit hymns and songs, storytelling, and a drama, *shruti-nataka*.

Values Education and Youth Programmes

Ramakrishna Math, Haripad conducted a Vivekananda Values Education Camp on 8 July 2019 at Thrissur. 188 students of Sri Ramakrishna Gurukula Vidyamandiram of Ramakrishna Ashrama, Thrissur attended the camp. The value of the powers of the mind was taken as the subject. Guided meditation on Swami Vivekananda was also taught to the students.

Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, organised the following programmes from April 2018 to March 2019:

Youth conferences held all over West Bengal: the Institute organised 270 conferences including organisation-based youth conferences, guardians' conferences, teachers' conferences, district-level youth conferences, and school-level youth conferences. The Institute organised 211 youth conferences and 15 school-level youth conferences. Among them 167 youth conferences were organised in rural areas and 59 youth conferences in urban areas. 39,011 youth, both boys and girls, in the age group 15 to 25 years participated. 14,487 boys from the rural areas and 5,681 boys from the urban areas belonging to the age group of 15 to 25 years participated. In rural and urban areas, 13,692 and 5,151 girls of the age group 15 to 25 years respectively participated in the youth conferences. The youth conferences in the rural areas covered 334 villages of West Bengal.

All these conferences covered the following districts of West Bengal: Kolkata, South 24 Parganas, Howrah, Nadia, North 24 Parganas, Uttar Sundarban, Hooghly, Purba Medinipur, Paschim Medinipur, Murshidabad, Burdwan, Bankura, Birbhum, Purulia, Uttar Dinajpur, and Jalpaiguri. 7,297 male and 6,469 female participants above 25 years of age participated.

The Institute organised 12 district-level youth conferences where cultural competitions on elocution, recitation, drawing, and music

were organised and the prizes to the winners were awarded.

Teachers Conferences : Five teachers' conferences were held in which 609 teachers, both male and female, participated.

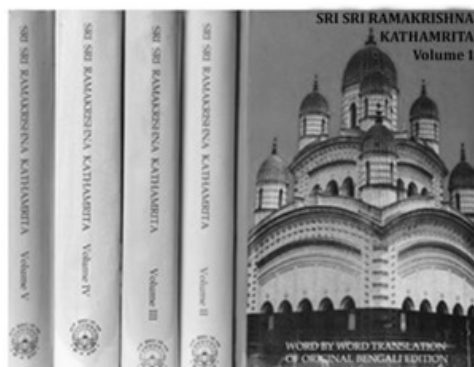
Guardian's Conferences: 27 guardians' conferences were held in which altogether 4,420 male and female guardians participated.

Distribution of Books: 41,825 books on values education published by the Institute, on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda were distributed free among the youth, teachers, and parents delegates who had attended the teacher's and guardian's conferences. 1. *Sabar Swamiji*: 10,000 copies; 2. *Swami Vivekananda Manishider Chokhe*: 1,500 copies; 3. *Adarsha Chhatra Jivan*: 3,670 copies; 4. *Bharater Nivedita*: 1,320 copies; 5. *Yuvanayak Vivekananda*: 3,000 copies; 6. *Swamiji o Tar Vani*: 1,500 copies; 7. *Swami Vivekananda—Ek Sangrami Jivan*: 2,500 copies; 8. *Jago Vir*: 1,500 copies; 9. *Nirbhik O Shaktiman Hao*: 3,000 copies; 10. *Vyaktitver Vikas*: 3,000 copies; 11. *Manishi Bhavanay Natun Bharat*: 500 copies; 12. *Parivrajak Swamiji Deshe Videshe*: 150 copies; 13. *Swamijir Chicago Vaktrita*, published by Government of West Bengal: 10,185 copies;

Vivekananda Anushilan Classes are aimed at imparting moral, spiritual, and cultural values to the youths in accordance with the Indian ethos and the universal teaching of Swami Vivekananda. These classes were regularly conducted on Saturdays from 4 to 5.30 p.m. among the youths of the age group 15–30 years. Total 1,394 boys and 884 girls attended the 46 classes conducted.

To help and focus students, the Institute is conducting academic counselling with the help of experienced psychiatrists since 2009. 40 new students got enrolled. 144 Students attended 42 academic counselling classes and among them 83 students were male and 61 were female students.





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Mayavati Renovation Work Report



It was a long-standing desire of Swami Vivekananda to have an ashrama in the Himalayas. In his reply to the welcome address given to him in Almora, he expressed:

‘Friends, you have been very kind to allude to an idea of mine, which is to start a centre in the Himalayas, and perhaps I have sufficiently explained why it should be so, why, above all others, this is the spot which I want to select as one of the great centres to teach this universal religion. These mountains are associated with the best memories of our race; if these Himalayas are taken away from the history of religious India, there will be very little left behind. Here, therefore, must be one of those centres, not merely of activity, but more of calmness, of meditation, and of peace; and I hope some day to realise it.’

This idea of Swamiji was finally materialised in March 1899, when Mrs Charlotte and Mr Henry Sevier, a British couple disciple of him, acquired a property in the locality of Mayavati, present district of Champawat, Uttarakhand, with the sole purpose of establishing an ashrama. After a long search in different localities around Almora, this British couple together with Swami Swarupananda, who was then the editor of the monthly journal in English *Prabuddha Bharata*, found a secluded and peaceful place that fulfilled almost all of Swami Vivekananda’s vision for a centre in the Himalayas.

The property was a tea estate and consisted of about 25 acres of forestland at an altitude of 6,400 feet, 50 miles east of Almora, and it commanded a magnificent view of the Himalayan snow peaks. There was at least one usable building and several huts. They decided to use the main tea processing and store building as the ashrama quarters. The challenge to convert a storehouse into a living ashrama was tremendous. Moreover, this building had to house the press and binding department of *Prabuddha Bharata*, a monthly journal of the Order, which was shifted from Almora to Mayavati. Mr Henry Sevier was the manager of the ashrama, but due to his austere life, hard work and some previous ailments, he left his body in October 1900. Swami Vivekananda somehow felt this loss while travelling in Egypt and immediately decided to come back to India. After reaching Kolkata, he came to know of Mr Sevier’s passing and made plans to come to Mayavati.

Together with Swamis Shivananda and Sadananda, Swamiji reached Mayavati on 3 January 1901. He stayed till 18 January, giving instructions, inspiration and immense joy to the struggling residents of the ashrama, including Swami(s) Swarupananda, Virajananda, Sachidananda, Vimalananda, Brahmachari Amritananda, and Mrs Sevier. The contribution



Swami Swarupananda

of Mrs Sevier to develop and sustain Swamiji's ideal for a centre in the Himalayas and her all-round financial support is unparalleled. During her eighteen-year stay at the ashrama she became endeared to one and all as the "Mother of Mayavati".

After Swamiji's visit to Mayavati, a new chapter in the spiritual history of the world started to unfold. The following extract from the "Prospectus of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati", written by Swami Vivekananda himself, summarizes the spirit through which hundreds of monks and sincere aspirants have been living and working together in Mayavati till present:

"Wherever there has been expansion in love or progress in well being of individuals or numbers, it has been through the perception, realization, and practicalisation of the Eternal Truth—The Oneness of All Beings. ... To give this ONE TRUTH a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start this Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practiced nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems [of philosophy], this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone."

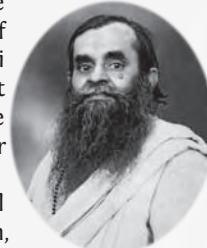
On 23 March 2018 Srmat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated in the presence of several monks and devotees the "Restoration Mayavati. The project has the restoring the four old buildings where Swami Vivekananda building and Captain Sevier and main building was the first to be approach has been adopted. on the site with structural wood specialists from Forest it was decided to restore the possible, local materials in use some 140 years ago. An architect has been hired, while skilled



Swami Smaranananda

India and local experts in the traditional technologies are bringing back an outlook similar to the one Swami Vivekananda saw when he visited the ashrama.

Faithful to Swamiji's ideas for this ashrama, this main building will house a meditation hall and a large exhibition hall in the ground floor, while in the first floor there will be a small meditation room, a Mother Sevier room, a Mayavati Diaries room and, to keep the building alive, two rooms for senior sadhus.



Swami Virajananda

purpose of conserving and of the ashrama: the main one stayed, the Prabuddha Bharata Mother Sevier Cottages. The taken up, for which a traditional After several consultations engineers from IIT Roorkee and Research Institute, Dehradun, building only with, as far as at the time of its construction, specialized in conservation workers from different parts of

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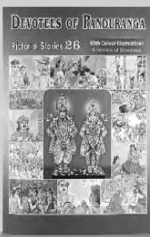


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We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

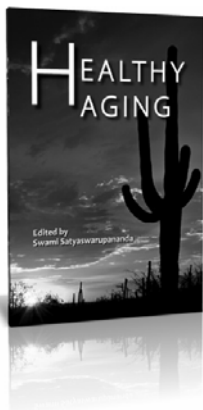


Swami Vivekananda

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August 29, 2019
Happy Tithipuja!

Swami Advaitananda (1928–1909)

“Gopalda made strenuous efforts to mould his life according to the life and example of the Master, and would sometimes express disappointment that he fell so short of the ideal. But this feeling of disappointment indicated only his real spiritual height. Because of his age, Gopalda did not engage himself in any public activity, philanthropic, missionary, or otherwise, so that his monastic life was quite uneventful. But so long as he was in the physical body, he definitely set an example to all, and he was the source of inspiration to many. His uniform steadfastness in sadhana till the last days of his life elicited admiration, if not reverence, even from his brother disciples. His love for truth was wonderful. He heard the Master say that one should not twist truth even to make fun. Gopalda obeyed this instruction in letter and spirit and insisted on others doing likewise.”

—Swami Gambhirananda

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PILGRIM'S GUIDE TO THE HOLY TRIO IN KOLKATA



Thakur and Maa Visit Siddheswari Kali Bagbazar I

Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother both had great respect for the Bagbazar Siddheswari Kali Mandir. This image has a remarkable history. More than 500 years ago, Tapaswi Kalibar, a Himalayan sadhu received a command from the Divine Mother to come and establish worship of her body part (shaktipith) hidden under the bank of the Adiganga in Southern Kolkata. Immediately Tapaswi set on foot, and arrived in what today is known as Bagbazar, Chitpore Road of Kolkata, and began to do intense tapasya. It was a dense jungle at that time with dacoits and wild animals roaming about. Pleased with the sadhu's devotion, Kali Ma gave darshan and instructed him to create and install a clay idol of her form—as She appeared to him—that would be known as Siddheswari Ma. Later in a dream, Kali Ma again instructed that the spot the sadhu



Siddheswari Maa

had chosen was not the actual shaktipith—he would have to go further south. Tapaswi Kalibar then handed charge over to some Tantrik sannyasins, and went on to discover the Shaktipith known today as Kalighat. Throughout the years, Bagbazar Siddheswari Ma came to be known as “Dacoit Ma” because

dacoits would perform many human sacrifices for the Devi. In the early 18th century, Govindaram Mitra, the black zamindar, established a large temple here which was then known as the Black Pagoda Temple. Mitra built a nine-turreted or Nabaratna temple of Goddess Kali on the banks of the Ganges at Kumortuli in 1730. Its 165 feet spire was a navigational aid for sailors and it was even taller than the Ootacamund Monument. In 1737, a major earthquake and cyclone both struck on the same day, and the temple suffered

substantial damage. Again in 1840, a cyclone completely destroyed the Black Pagoda temple. Miraculously Siddheswari Ma's murthi was unscathed! Subsequently her statue was moved across the street to a small ground floor of Kalibari where worship continues today at 520, Rabindra Sarani, near Kumartuli.



Drawing made in 1787 of Black Pagoda Temple on Chitpur Road that stood 165 feet tall.



Present day small replica of Black Pagoda temple

In loving memory of Dr. Rina Bhar —Dr. Gopal Chandra Bhar

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*The best guide in life is strength. In religion,
as in all other matters, discard everything
that weakens you, have nothing to do
with it.*

—Swami Vivekananda

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